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**The Historical Articulation of ‘the People’
in Revolutionary Cuba.
Media Discourses of Unity in
Times of National Debate (1990-2012)**

By:

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Abstract

If there is one revolution that claims to have happened in the name of the people, that is surely the Cuban Revolution. This thesis examines the discursive construction of ‘the Cuban people’ during the periods of national debate. More specifically, this thesis analyses ‘the people’ through the lens of national newspaper *Granma* during the Party-led calls for debate that preceded the IV (1991), and the VI (2011) Congresses of the Communist Party of Cuba (*Partido Comunista de Cuba*, PCC). I then go on to discuss the hegemonic construction of ‘the people’ with contemporary Cuban journalists, who offer competing articulations of national belonging.

This thesis draws on Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) Discourse Theory, which is systematised through a combination of qualitative methods of analysis. In this work, I have analysed over 500 newspaper articles, paying special attention to historical interdiscursivity, that is, to the historical origins in which media discourses are embedded. Then, contextual factors are further examined through in-depth interviews with Cuban journalists.

The data indicates that *Granma* has constructed a populist discourse by which ‘the Cuban people’ are united against a common, hubristic enemy. On the one hand, the revolutionary leadership has externalised problems through the mediated construction of an external enemy, the United States, which is held responsible for the failures of the revolutionary project. On the other hand, the leadership has simultaneously managed to channel a great deal of social discontent through hegemonic interventions aimed at renewing consensus from within.

While the leadership has historically maintained a communicational and informational hegemony, which ensured the dissemination of the official discourse in the media, recent changes in the media and technological landscape have enabled the appearance of new spaces online, ending the PCC’s hegemonic control of the media system. In this new communicational setting, people’s demands are not just seen as the systematic result of a Revolution led astray from its democratic principles by an external enemy. Instead, the data indicates a discursive move from the externalisation to the internalisation of ‘the enemy’, presented as bureaucratic resistance to a people-led change.

Introduction

Eduardo Galeano (2015: 7) wrote of the historical leader of the Cuban Revolution: '*Fidel Castro. His enemies say that he was a king without a crown and that he confused unity with unanimity*'. However, the Uruguayan intellectual has also recognised the importance that Fidel's quixotic '*code of honour*', his old-fashioned 19th-century military values, played in Cuba's achievements. In this thesis, I analyse the discursive construction of 'the Cuban people' in times of national debate through the lens of the state-owned newspaper *Granma*, as well as the discourse of Cuban journalists. The data indicates that the official discourse has constructed 'the Cuban people' as morally connected to their ancestors through a set of roles and values. I argue that the historical construction of Cubanness is at the roots of Cuban populism, a discourse of popular unity guided by people's belonging to a revolutionary code of ethics that ensures victory against any threats.

In this work, I have used a mixed-methods approach that combines discourse theoretical analysis, discourse historical analysis, and qualitative interviews –see next section for a full explanation. The analysis of 'the people' in revolutionary Cuba has been approached from two points of view. First, I have analysed 560 news stories from the main Cuban national newspaper, *Granma*. The case study focuses on the construction of a collective identity, that is, 'the people' during the debates that preceded the IV (1991) and the VI (2011) congresses of the Communist Party of Cuba. This analysis has a special focus on historical interdiscursivity; that is, on the historical origins in which media discourses are embedded. Then, I have conducted 25 in-depth interviews in order to examine the discourse of *Granma* through the lenses of Cuban journalists.

This thesis attempts to answer the following overarching research question: How has the Cuban press constructed 'the people' in times of national debate? What sparked my initial curiosity on the subject was the unfulfilling findings of my MA thesis, which examined the foreign media's coverage of socioeconomic change in Cuba. My overall impression was that, to paraphrase Lori Robinson, the Chicago Tribune correspondent, it was frustrating to get in, and to get It. But my journalistic instinct kept drawing me in. This is how I started following the Cuban media: to what extent were citizens able to push for or resist change? What was their role in the whole process?

The main research question is explored through a set of three sub-questions: (1) How has *Granma*'s construction of 'the people' legitimised the hegemony of the Cuban revolutionary project? (2) How has the hegemonic construction of 'the people' been challenged in the press? These two questions are addressed from a historical point of view, comparing *Granma*'s discourse during two periods of Party-led debate that preceded the IV (1991) and the VI (2011)

congresses of the Communist Party of Cuba (*'Partido Comunista de Cuba'*, PCC). The third question looks at the discourse of Cuban journalists: (3) How is the press articulation of 'the people' perceived in the discourse of Cuban journalists? These three sub-questions have shaped the analysis. Chapter four seeks to understand the discursive articulation of 'the people' through the lens of national newspaper *Granma*. Chapter five looks at the same newspaper, but focuses instead on the disarticulation of the official discourse, that is, on the way in which *Granma* challenges the hegemonic articulation of 'the people'. Finally, chapter six analyses the discourse of Cuban journalists, exploring the possibilities of a journalist-led rearticulation of 'the people'.¹

The main argument is that being Cuban has been articulated through an appeal to historically rooted nationalist and populist discourses. In this sense, the Cuban people are presented as continuing a legacy of heroic revolutionary victories, which determined the collective values to be adopted in times of crisis. These crises were sparked by the hubristic influence of internal and external elites that threatened the fulfillment of the revolutionary collective project. One of the main findings is that the enemy of 'the people' was not simply externalised (as the United States, imperialism, capitalism), but also internalised. In fact, the press has promoted a great degree of anti-status quo sentiment against the bureaucratic elite, and those within the Party ranks that resist change.

Analytical and Methodological Rationale

This thesis draws on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's concept of Discourse Theory developed in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985). Laclau and Mouffe's work draws on Lacan's psychoanalysis and Saussurean linguistics from a post-structuralist and post-Marxist perspective. Their work has been at the roots of the Essex School of discourse analysis, where it has been further developed by other scholars, such as David Howarth, and Jason Glynos. In this thesis, I take some analytical concepts from Discourse Theory. In order to explain the way in which I understand these concepts from the outset, I will explain the meaning of some discourse theoretical categories: populism, discourse, and nodal points, articulation, and popular demands.

This thesis draws on Ernesto Laclau's (2005a) definition of populism as discourse. Taking a social constructivist perspective, Laclau sees discourse as a practice that constructs the social world, partially fixing meaning (Howarth, 2000). It is through discursive practices of unification

¹ During my fieldwork at the *University of Havana*, I conducted 25 in-depth interviews. While some of the interviewees identify primarily as academics or bloggers, I will use the term 'journalist' to refer to all the interviewees, since they are all either trained journalists, or work in digital media projects.

and simplification, therefore, that the complex social world becomes intelligible (Gaonkar, 2012). Discourse provides a partially fixed structure that needs to be filled with meaning. Having explained the concept of discourse, I will introduce the logic underneath a discourse theoretical approach to populism. In discourse theory, populism is a discursive practice that articulates collective identities around a (partially) fixed notion of ‘the people’, which is presented as opposed to a (partially) fixed ‘enemy’. Populism consists of the discursive articulation of frontiers of belonging that separate the will of ‘the people’ from the will of ‘others’ (a non-people). It is this opposition that allows ‘the people’ to be mobilised at once in a hegemonic discourse. The perception of fixed categories of ‘the people’ and ‘the enemy’ indicate that a discourse has become hegemonic. In other words, it indicates that a discourse has managed to render a complex social world intelligible through the (1) unification of popular demands in their shared antagonism towards an ‘enemy’, and through the (2) simplification of all popular demands in a (fictional) all-encompassing ‘people’.²

The process of articulation refers to the practice that makes a specific discursive formation look cohesive. However, articulations are inherently reductive and incomplete, which takes me back to the idea of unification-simplification of social reality. Ernesto Laclau considers that there are structures of meaning that we perceive as relatively cohesive. This cohesion is achieved thanks to the stability of nodal points, that is, of certain signifiers that –emptied from their original meaning– fictionally stand as representing totality. For instance, in populism the idea of ‘the people’ becomes a nodal point when it is seen as embodying everyone –even the actual meaning of ‘everyone’ depends on the nature of the hegemonic discourse. In Laclau’s body of work, there are two main ways of articulating the will of the people, that is, people’s demands. Demands can be articulated around a populist logic, that is, as unified in their opposition to a common threat: ‘the enemy’. For instance, in exclusionary populism demands are usually articulated around ‘the people’ as nation, excluding other members of society, such as immigrants, that are seen to threaten national unity (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013; De Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2017). However, demands can also be articulated around an institutional logic. This second logic stresses the differential nature of demands. Therefore, it can (1) challenge the equivalence of hegemonic articulations or (2) simply articulate popular demands as not sharing a common threat and, which are therefore, solvable within existing institutional channels.

² Ernesto Laclau considers that popular demands are the basic form of political articulation (Laclau, 2005a: 154). In this thesis, the term ‘popular demands’ will refer to demands that arise from ‘the people. These demands become ‘populist’ demands when they are discursively integrated into a logic of equivalence that unifies them against a common threat.

In developing Ernesto Laclau's line of argument, I conceptualise popular demands as the most basic form of political articulation. Popular demands, that is, people's unmet requests within a given hegemonic system, remain specific, and distinctive from one another. However, popular demands become 'populist demands' when they are integrated within a discourse that unifies them around a clear core. This core is contingent, and can be a particular idea, a goal, a threat, or even a leader. What is important is that the core comes to stand for all popular demands, temporarily unifying and stabilising them. Therefore, populist discourse becomes a transposition of popular politics. The discussion of 'empty signifiers' in chapter two offers a more in-depth analysis of the way in which popular demands are articulated in a populist discourse.

Popular demands and subjective identities have been distanced from their original distinctiveness and articulated around 'the Revolution' through equivalential chains of meaning. However, these chains, far from remaining stable, have only been fixed temporarily. Dislocative processes can render their contingent articulation visible, allowing for the creation of new and competing articulations. For instance, the consolidation of non-hegemonic spaces for debate are unveiling alternative articulations of popular demands, threatening the state discursive hegemony. Furthermore, the re-opening of diplomatic relations with the United States is also rearticulating the nature of the relationship in a transition from antagonism to agonism, that is, from an enemy-other to an adversary-other, with whom negotiation may be possible.

Discourse theory looks at populism from an ontological perspective that focuses on the articulation of meaning, that is, on the construction of partially fixed structures of meaning. A discourse theoretical analysis, therefore, is not focused on the particular content of populist discourse, but on the process of unification and simplification that constructs 'the people' against 'the enemy'. In this thesis, I draw on a discourse theoretical analytical framework. However, I develop a methodological approach that combines discourse theoretical analysis (Carpentier and De Cleen, 2007) and discourse historical analysis (De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak, 1999). Therefore, I examine discourse from both an ontological and an ontic perspective. This has enabled me to look at populist discourse as logic of articulation, as well as at the specific ways in which such articulation takes place.

From a discourse theoretical approach, I examine the (partially) fixed structures of meaning, which I will call nodal points, that construct 'the people' against a powerful enemy.³ From a discourse historical approach, I draw on the work of Reisigl and Wodak (2015) and examine strategies of nomination –categorisation of 'the people', 'the enemy' and other nodal points–,

³ The concept of nodal points is further developed in chapter two.

predication –attributions of the nodal points–, and argumentation –justification of equivalential chains. Therefore, when I use the term ‘construction’, I am in fact referring to two different approaches to discourse: an ontological approach, and an ontic one.

The Roots of Cuban Revolutionary Discourse

Taking a Laclaunian approach to populism has important implications that need to be addressed. First, this thesis does not contend that the Cuban Revolution is in itself a populist movement. Second, it does not define Fidel Castro as a populist leader. Instead, this thesis argues that the revolutionary construction of ‘the Cuban people’ has been guided by a populist logic that presents ‘the people’ as united for the achievement of shared –thus, equivalential– goals. With the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, the official discourse articulated the ‘revolutionary people’ as equivalential to the 19th-century guerrilla fighters in the quest for national sovereignty. This chain of equivalence was opposed to the construction of an external enemy –US imperialism– that constrained the fulfilment of historical, revolutionary, and popular demands for dignity, independence, and social justice. Therefore, ‘the enemy’, rather than the failures of the revolutionary system itself, distorted the fulfilment of people’s will.

During the first few years of the 1959 Revolution, political and ideological debates were substituted by the achievement of a ‘*radical*’ (Guerra, 2012) and ‘*elliptical*’ (Quiroga, 2005) morality. Fidel Castro’s own values were constructed as a continuation of the *Mambí*’s (19th-century independence fighters) unity, sacrifice, commitment, and faith in victory (as explained in chapter one). The use of historic achievements as a source of inspiration is what Quiroga (2005: 28) has called the ‘*oracular use of history in the future perfect*’. This discourse became particularly useful for dismissing the possibility of defeat, promising instead eternal victories in the face of ‘the enemy’. This historical sense of morality was constructed as essential to the construction of Guevara’s (1989) ‘new man’.

Every time ‘the Revolution’ has experienced a crisis, the leadership has tried to ease popular discontent through state-managed moral campaigns. The aim of these campaigns is to rearticulate popular demands around the institutional channels provided by ‘the Revolution’. This thesis argues that the main contribution to these campaigns has been to organise the collective mood around a promise of a people-led victory. The importance of promoting a spirit of optimism and faith in times of crisis has been essential for maintaining the stability of the hegemonic project.

State-led campaigns of national cohesion have been presented with generic, yet powerful names. Some scholars argue that these campaigns are a useful periodisation tool, since they correlate with the evolution of revolutionary discourse since 1959. Therefore, they are essential for understanding the different articulations of ‘the people’, and their revolutionary roles and values, throughout time. Coinciding with the first decade of revolutionary government, the late 1960s were characterised by a contraction of intellectuals’ and citizens’ enthusiasm. Sugar prices were low, Che Guevara had just been assassinated in Bolivia, and Fidel Castro decided that it was time to articulate Guevara’s ‘new man’, a virtuous and moral man who would sacrifice his wellbeing for the common good. In this context, he launched the ‘revolutionary offensive’ as a way of prioritising moral over economic incentives, appealing to workers’ revolutionary conscience (*conciencia*) of what is right and wrong. As part of this campaign, Fidel Castro launched the so-called ‘Ten Million Ton Sugar Harvest’ (*La Zafra de los Diez Millones*), calling all Cubans to contribute to this national goal via continual agricultural mobilisations. While the country achieved a significant sugar harvest in 1970, the 7.5 tonnes fell short of the initial goal, damaging morale and the ideological strength of ‘the Revolution’.

The second campaign started soon after the failed harvest. Cuba joined the COMECON, the economic organisation of mutual assistance led by the Soviet Union in the Eastern Bloc, and started a period of Sovietisation that had negative repercussions on intellectual freedom. The period started in 1971 and ended in 1976 is commonly known as the ‘Grey Quinquennium’ (*El Quinquenio Gris*) (Fornet, 2007), in reference to the bureaucratisation of Cuban cultural policies, and the persecution of revolutionary intellectuals accused of producing counter-revolutionary or homosexual work (the influence of the Grey Quinquennium’ on Cuban journalism is further developed in chapter one). In the mid-1980s, the leadership inaugurated a period of ‘Rectification of Mistakes and Negative Tendencies’ (*Rectificación de Errores y Tendencias Negativas*), coinciding with the reformist *perestroika* movement, and Gorbachev’s culture of *glasnost*, or openness.⁴

With the collapse of the Soviet Bloc in the early 1990s, Cuba, highly dependent on the Soviet economy, entered a deep recession. While the IV Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba was called in the spirit of ‘Rectification’, the deterioration of the economy led to harsh electricity and oil reductions, and severe food shortages.⁵ Therefore, the measures accepted in the congress did

⁴ The ‘Rectification of Mistakes and Negative Tendencies’ will be referred as ‘Rectification’ in the thesis when it refers to this period. The short form is commonly used in the Cuban media. However, I write the spirit of ‘rectification’ that came with in lower case.

⁵ In the early 1990s, Cuba lost about 80% of imports and exports, and GDP decreased by 35% (Martínez, 2015). This,

not match the demands that citizens had expressed during the preliminary debates. Cuban workers had to wait until 1994, when they were called once again to debate in their work centres (*Parlamentos Obrero*s).

In 1999, Fidel Castro launched the ‘Battle of Ideas’, which became a national campaign to bring back the young Cuban boy, Elián González, after his mother had drowned in a raft on their way to the United States. The ‘Battle of Ideas’ drew on the suspicion that the economic and social hardship of the 1990s could have endangered their commitment to the revolutionary project. Therefore, the project was conceived as a way of gaining back young Cubans’ support through cultural and educational initiatives. A recent nationalist campaign has focused on bringing the ‘Five Heroes’ back to Cuba, after they were convicted of conspiracy to commit espionage in 1998 when they were identified as infiltrating radical groups among the Cuban exile community in Miami. On 17 December 2014, the last three prisoners were freed as part of the thaw in diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States.

The period between Fidel Castro’s temporary (2006) and permanent (2008) transfer of power to his brother Raúl Castro inspired a new period of national debate (Piñero Harnecker, 2008). The demands that citizens expressed during this period have inspired the guidelines that would be discussed before the celebration of the VI Congress in 2011, according to ‘the Party’. This congress initiated a five-year process of ‘Updating of the Economic and Social Model’ (*‘Actualización del Modelo Económico y Social’*), which was extended for five more years at the 2016 VII Congress.⁶ On the one hand, these moral campaigns have allowed the leadership to internalise popular demands, presenting a unified strategy for dealing with internal contradictions. On the other hand, they have allowed the leadership to externalise popular demands, reinforcing the antagonism against the United States, constructed as the ultimate enemy that has distorted the progression of ‘the Revolution’ and the fulfilment of popular demands.

The elements that articulate hegemonic unity against an external threat have been losing their cohesive power for decades. In fact, the ideological and economic crisis of the ‘Special Period’, caused by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, magnified an accumulation of popular

combined with the reinforcement of the US economic and financial blockade, meant that the country had to face difficulties accessing supplies, spare parts, and credit.

⁶ For practical reasons, the ‘Updating of the Economic and Social Model’ will be referred to as the ‘Updating’ (*‘La Actualización’*). This short version is commonly used in the Cuban media. I will commonly use the ‘Updating’ as the period that starts with the 2010 Party calls to debate that preceded the VI Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba. Although my period of analysis ends when ‘the Party’ held the 2012 I National Conference of the Party, the process of ‘Updating’ was still ongoing at the time of writing this thesis.

frustration, thereby intensifying processes of de-identification and re-identification within the revolutionary project.⁷

The renewal of the revolutionary myth through hegemonic interventions has allowed ‘the Party’ to acknowledge popular demands, to unify them around new equivalential chains, and to promise redemption while reinforcing its leadership as a unifying force against both internal and external antagonisms. Furthermore, ‘the Party’ has been able to channel popular dissatisfaction towards specific parts of the revolutionary project, sacrificing certain ideals while preventing the leadership as a whole from becoming the target of popular frustration. I have explained that popular demands have been channelled through the widening of internal institutional processes of negotiation and dialogue. The main channel in cases of extreme crisis has been ‘the Party’ call for national debate. Whereas these debates have allowed exchanges between the leadership and citizens, the process has been led from the top. Calls for debate, the channels of legitimate debate (such as mass organisations), the list of debatable projects, the co-optation of citizen demands, and the unification of popular demands have all been led by ‘the Party’. The hierarchical creation of these moral campaigns was successfully presented to citizens through the hegemonic control of the mass media. Due to the lack of non-institutional spaces for debate, ‘the Party’ has sustained a privileged communicational position.

The combination of populist and institutional logics of articulation, and the simultaneous externalisation and internalisation of popular dissatisfaction, have helped ‘the Revolution’ to avoid dislocation. However, the recent confluence of economic, political, generational, diplomatic and communicational changes is calling into question the effectiveness of traditional articulations, and interviews with Cuban journalists and media experts suggest that a dislocation of the system might not only be unavoidable, but also necessary for the survival of ‘the Revolution’ itself.

Overall, the construction of a collective, moral belonging is highly present in the Cuban national press. The data reveals that this construction is based on a series of historic events, places, dates and heroes that are considered of great importance for Cubans, and which need to be constantly remembered and passed on to younger generations through the media. However, interviews with Cuban journalists and media experts challenge the way in which the revolutionary leadership uses history and national belonging as a tool for national unity.

⁷ The ‘Special Period’ refers to the ‘Special Period in Time of Peace’ that started in 1990 and that lasted until the early 21st century. For practical reasons, I will use the short form in this thesis.

Contextualising the IV and VI Congresses of the Communist Party of Cuba

This thesis analyses the construction of ‘the people’ during the Party-led calls to debate that preceded the IV (1991) and VI (2011) congresses of the Communist Party of Cuba. The IV Congress took place during the so-called ‘Special Period in Time of Peace’ (*‘Periodo Especial en Tiempos de Paz’*), while the VI Congress was held during the ‘updating’ of the Cuban economic and social model. Both congresses were dedicated to historic national victories in the face of an external enemy. Through historical remembrance, ‘the Party’ aimed at instilling a spirit of patriotism and optimism in the population, which would allow the nation to overcome new challenges. In the following lines, I will contextualise both periods of analysis (1990-1991 and 2010-2012), as well as the historical events that inspired the congresses.

The first period of analysis, the call to national debate that took place between 1990 and 1991, coincided with a Party-led hegemonic campaign, called the ‘Special Period in Time of Peace’. ‘The Special Period’ refers to the period of economic decline caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Soviet socialism. Until 1989, Cuba had relied heavily on the Soviet Union for agricultural products and fuel. Therefore, the end of this relationship had drastic economic repercussions for the Cuban economy, which was still under a severe international economic embargo imposed by the United States.⁸ In 1990, oil supplies from the Soviet Union failed to arrive, and in August the Cuban government had to announce a series of special measures aimed at tackling the consequences of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, its principal ally and trading partner at the time. In September 1990, the Soviet Union announced the transition to a market economy and the ‘Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany’ was finally signed, paving the way for the unification of Germany. A few weeks earlier, on the 27 August 1990, *Granma* published a press release from the government, recognising shortages of electricity. Two days later, the paper mentioned the ‘special period’ on the front page, together with an informative note to citizens in which the government announced a series of ‘special measures’ that were to be implemented right away. This seems to be the official announcement of the ‘Special Period in Time of Peace’.

⁸ Right before the crisis, the Soviet Union was supplying 63% of Cuban food supplies, and 80% of machinery. Furthermore, Cuba also obtained sugar subsidies from the Soviet Union, and destined over 60% of its sugar exports to the country (Gott, 2004: 287). From 1990 to 1993, the gross domestic product (GDP) decreased by 34.8%, and there was a reduction in merchandise imports and exports of over 70%. (ASCE, 2002).

On 11 September 1990, *Granma* announced a plan to save 10 per cent energy, and on 24 September it published special measures to reduce the frequency and the length of newspapers due to paper shortages.⁹ ‘The Party’ also took political measures. For instance, *Granma* published, in early October, prior to the IV Congress, ‘Measures for the functioning and structure of the Party’ (*‘Medidas para el funcionamiento y estructura del Partido’*). In the context of the alert that prevailed after the US invasion of Panama between December 1989 and January 1990, and the defeat of the Sandinistas a month later, *Granma* published, in October 1990, that the United States planned to toughen the embargo against the Island¹⁰. American plans to end the revolutionary government –equated to ‘the people’ and to the ‘nation’– gained prominence in the newspaper throughout the 1990s. This period proved a difficult test for the Revolution, which suffered ‘*a virtual collapse*’ never seen before (Gott, 2004). Due to shortages, there was a drastic cut in public consumption, including food and electricity. This would lead to growing frustration with the government, ultimately ending in protests and mass migration to the United States – which culminated with the 1994 ‘Cuban Raft Exodus’.

The evolution of international and national affairs is of great importance for understanding the different context in which ‘the Party’ called to debate (15 March 1990), and the IV Congress was held (from 10 to 14 October 1991). During those 19 months, the economic situation of the country worsened significantly. In the midst of the crisis, the spirit of critical debate and change that came in the mid-1980s alongside a Party-led ‘Rectification of Mistakes’ faded away. Despite initial hopes of open discussion, the IV Congress was celebrated in a political climate that exacerbated national unity and defence, seeing criticism as a threat to revolutionary survival. The IV Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba was dedicated to the 19th century Ten Years War, which ended Spanish colonial rule in Cuba. In the following lines, I would like to introduce some key events and actors that were essential in the fight for national liberation. ‘The Cry of Yara’ (*‘El Grito de Yara’*), also known as the uprising at ‘Demajagua’, was a call to rebellion against Spanish rule, which would spark the Ten Years War in 1868 between the Cuban Liberation Army, led by Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and Antonio Maceo, and the Spanish Colonial Army. Carlos Manuel de Céspedes is considered one of the fathers of the nation, or ‘*Padre de la Patria*’. Having freed his slaves at his sugar plantation whilst declaring independence from Spanish rule,

⁹ *Granma* became the only national daily and was to be published Monday to Friday with 8 pages in total –plus a Havana-based edition on Saturday, of 6 pages. ‘The Party’ was to issue 250,000 copies of the paper. Newspapers *Juventud Rebelde* and *Trabajadores* become weekly publications. However, ‘the Party’ maintained the magazine *Bohemia* as a weekly publication, as well as 15 regional newspapers. Finally, all journalists were to be relocated according to the policies established for the ‘special period’.

¹⁰ Washington strengthened the embargo through the Cuban Democratic Act (1992), and the Helms-Burton Act (1996).

he became one of the many heroes of Cuban revolutionary discourse. Antonio Maceo fought alongside Céspedes throughout the Ten Years War (*'La Guerra de los Diez Años'*). He is a symbolic figure because of his insistence, at Baraguá, that no truce with Spain could be accepted until slavery was abolished, and that Cuba was a sovereign state. Therefore, his figure represents loyalty to the nation, and intransigence against external enemies.

Maceo led a small, break-away faction that refused to recognise the 'Pact of Zanjón' (*'El Pacto de Zanjón'*); the truce that officially ended the war between the rebels and the Spanish army. The truce, he argued, fell short of abolishing slavery immediately, and granting Cubans independence. These demands were put forward by Maceo and his followers at a meeting in Baraguá, but to no avail. The day of the truce, 10 February 1878, is significant in Cuban revolutionary history as it represents the triumph of heroic independence fighters over an all-powerful enemy. Therefore, Baraguá represents the fight of 'the people', 'the underdog', against foreign powers, through sacrifice and patriotism.

The second period of analysis (2010-2012) focuses on the period of debate that led to the VI Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba and took place during a Party-led hegemonic campaign called the 'Updating of the Economic and Social Model' (*'Actualización del Modelo Económico y Social'*) of the country. The debate took place after Fidel Castro's definitive transfer of power to his brother Raúl in 2008. Fidel Castro's step-down from power was seen at the time as leaving Cuba *'on the verge of one of the most anticipated and dramatic political transitions of our time'* (Erickson, 2008: 312).

In this new era, 'the Party' faced several challenges: to lead the transition from Fidel Castro's personal style of governing to a collective leadership, to improve economic performance as a way of gaining political legitimisation, and to pave the way for a post-Castro Cuba (Hoffmann, 2011a and 2016; Chaguaceda and Centeno, 2012).¹¹ The Communist Party of Cuba called citizens to debate the 'guidelines of the economic and social policies of the Party and the Revolution' (*'lineamientos de la política económica y social'*) on 8 November 2010, before their approval in the VI Congress in 2011.

The VI Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba started on 16 April 2011, only five months after the call to debate. That date marked the 50th anniversary of Cuba's victory against the attack led by the US and the Cuban exiles in Miami that took place at Playa Girón (which is the way the 'Bay of Pigs' is referred to in the official discourse). The VI Congress was announced by Raúl

¹¹ Raúl Castro is expected to announce his retirement in February 2018.

Castro 14 years after the last Party congress, which took place in 1997. The VI Congress was focused on the debate of economic and social policies, and did not have a political focus. However, on 20 April 2011, the day after the closure of the Congress, Cuban newspaper *Granma* announced, on the back cover, the 'First National Conference of the Party' ('*Primera Conferencia Nacional del Partido*') on 28 January 2012. The conference would discuss political and ideological issues, as well as the procedures and structures of 'the Party', and would be preceded by a debate among militants of 'the Party' –rather than involving 'the common people'.

Since 2008, the government has promoted a decentralisation and reorganisation of the economy through a new labour law, which recognises the rights of those citizens who no longer work for the state, known as '*trabajadores por cuenta propia*' (Ludlam, 2012).¹² Raúl Castro's leadership has promoted economic reform, fostering the creation of cooperatives and self-employment, offering more autonomy to farmers, allowing the purchase and selling of houses, cars and domestic appliances, as well as the acquisition of computers and cell phones. The Island has also undergone substantive changes in citizens' connectivity. Internet access has improved significantly as part of US-Cuba bilateral agreements, including citizens' ownership of mobile phones and computers, the proliferation of public Wi-Fi hotspots, and household internet access in certain areas of Old Havana since March 2007.

During the period of debate, Cuban exile Luis Posada Carriles, former member of the CIA who participated in the 'Playa Girón' invasion, was acquitted of over 11 causes against him, including the bombing of a civilian Cuban airline that killed 73 people in 1976. This event reinforced the idea of an all-powerful external enemy, embodied by the anti-Castro radical exiles in Miami, who are not held accountable for their crimes against Cuba. US president John F. Kennedy's failed attempt to invade Cuba at Playa Girón (the Bay of Pigs) on 17 April 1961 became the topic of the VI Congress of 'the Party'. The Girón invasion, coordinated by the CIA and Cuban exiles in Miami, was preceded by other aggressions of less magnitude in Cuban territory. The invasion took place one day after Fidel Castro had declared the Socialist character of the Revolution during the funeral of one of the victims of a US bombing, and soon after, had ordered for the nationalisation of private property, most of which was American owned. The attempted invasion took place at a time in which the US saw Latin America and the Caribbean as its natural area of influence, and during which CIA-led coups d'état in Latin America were not uncommon –for instance the overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1964.

¹² According to official statistics, there were over half a million self-employed people in Cuba in 2016, a significant increase since the 2010 widening of the range of professions that could be undertaken independently from the State (ONEI, 2016a; EFE, 2017).

The victory of Fidel's freshly recruited 'rag-tag' troops over an imperial superpower would instil a sense of great pride in Cuba, recalling the endless struggle of the Mambises –19th century revolutionary fighters– against invaders. The events in Girón were presented as a reminder of US attempts to overthrow the revolutionary government, and to invade Cuba, with the collaboration of Miami-based groups of radical anti-Castro exiles. Girón also represents Cuban heroism in the face of a powerful external enemy. The invasion was one among many failed attempts to destabilise 'the Revolution'. According to Richard Gott (2004: 190), *'the invasion was one of the major strategic errors of the United States in the twentieth century, reinforcing Castro's control over Cuba, ensuring the permanence of his Revolution and helping to drive him into the Soviet camp'*.

Current Debates in a Post-Fidel Cuba

Over the last years, Cuba has experienced a series of major changes that will require a rearticulation of revolutionary belonging, and of 'the Revolution' itself. The founding father of 'the Revolution', Fidel Castro, died on 25 November 2016, leaving his 85-year-old brother Raúl full responsibility in the maintenance and renewal of the revolutionary project. Fidel's death occurred approximately 2 years after the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, on 17 December 2014, which initiated a period of 'normalisation' and negotiation on issues of mutual concern. The 'Updating' of the Cuban economic and social model has the ambitious task of setting the path for the survival of a post-Castro Revolution. In fact, Raúl Castro has promised to step down from power in 2018, since his announcement of two 5-year term limits during the 2011 VI Congress. Some of the measures that Raúl's government has promoted include the decentralisation of the state, public sector cutbacks, the promotion of self-employment (roughly half a million Cubans are self-employed, according to official statistics) (ONEI, 2016a).

'The Revolution' has gone through previous periods of crises, successfully rearticulating popular demands on each occasion. However, these chains, far from remaining stable, have only been temporarily fixed, and dislocative processes can expose their contingent articulation, allowing for the creation of new and competing articulations. This is where the main change lies, as nowadays the crisis is being played out in a different communicational setting characterised by the rise of independent media actors and projects that give visibility to alternative articulations of popular demands, threatening the discursive hegemony of the state. The Cuban media ecosystem is no longer limited to institutional channels and publications, and there is a range of non-institutional

projects that aim to foster public debate online. While Cuba still has the lowest Internet connectivity in the western hemisphere, access is improving. According to official data, there are 318 public Wi-Fi hotspots on the Island (ETECSA, 2017), a significant increase from the initial 35 hotspots that were opened in June 2015. The Cuban Institute of National Statistics (ONEI, 2016b) reveals that less than 10% of Cubans own a computer, while 35% has Internet access.

The Challenge of Researching a Divided Cuba

Conducting research on Cuba implies acknowledging that there exist multiple stories of the revolutionary process, both inside the Island and in the diaspora. At the very least, there is the ‘official’ history of ‘the Revolution’, as well as a ‘dissident’ one, as Quiroga (2005) highlights. The tension between these two main accounts has produced ‘mutual invisibility and discredit’ in some academic debates on Cuba (Rojas, 2010: 298). This suggests that any researcher studying Cuba will need to navigate the differences between Cuban articulations of ‘the Revolution’, the academic works produced on the Island (and which have made it through revolutionary filters), and the studies undertaken by authors within the Cuban diaspora. Rather than seeing these different accounts as mutually exclusive, or dismissing one view or the other for preconceived ideological reasons, this research project is aimed from the outset at understanding the Cuban Revolution through a variety of perspectives.

Cuban-American scholar Lillian Guerra (2012: 4) criticises the fact that most research on Cuban history focuses on the Island’s reaction to external factors, such as the Missile Crisis and the Fall of the Berlin Wall. In her view, these works reinforce a colonial view of the Island as eternally dependent, as an extension of other empires, be it the Soviet Union or the US. The result is a body of research that overlooks the complex, often complicit power relations that Cuban citizens established with the revolutionary state. Instead, the scholar proposes focusing on internal, micro-historical dimensions as a way of contextualising and understanding ‘the Revolution’ ‘from within’. This allows researchers to examine the way in which individuals and collective subjects engaged emotionally with official narratives, and helped to construct revolutionary Cuba through non-linear processes of participation, negotiation, and resistance.

This project has been designed as a discursive analysis of Cuban official accounts from within. The selection of the time frame is guided by Cuban internal affairs (the state-led debates that preceded some congresses of ‘the Communist Party of Cuba’), and studied through the frame of the state-owned media. Most of the data was collected during my fieldwork in Cuba, and I have often felt pressure to be ‘responsible’ with the information gathered, since all my interviewees

worked within the limits of revolutionary belonging (even if some defied the very idea of what a revolutionary journalist is, and can achieve). In this sense, there was always the danger of this thesis becoming constricted and indulgent. I have faced this possibility with a clear determination to understand the multiple ‘Cubas’ from a wider context, which included non-official, non-revolutionary, and occasionally dissident, diasporic interpretations of the revolutionary process.

The historical, political, cultural, and economic accounts of Cuba that appear in the Literature Review come from a variety of sources published both on the Island and abroad, granting more weight to the academic rigor and adequacy of the works under review than to the geographic location from which they were written.¹³ Therefore, the focus of the research does not stem from a normative privilege of official views, but from a sincere academic interest in understanding official accounts of ‘the Revolution’ that have often been assumed, rather than analysed, and hastily dismissed, rather than contextualised.

Cuba in the Field of Latin American Studies

This thesis makes an analytical distinction between populism and nationalism, which often appear as undifferentiated in academic research (de Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2017). The main drawback of this has been the naturalization of a western understanding of populism, which has been transposed into a universal and trans-historical analytical framework. However, the relationship between nationalism and populism varies greatly when we compare western democracies with new and transitional ones; or former colonial powers and their colonies. This thesis looks at media and populism in Cuba from a Latin Americanist perspective. The main argument is that Cuba is historically, geographically, culturally and politically close to Latin America. Latinamericanism has been a recurrent discursive element in Fidel Castro’s discourse, who has often presented Cuba as leading the way for regional liberation and social justice.

¹³ In an effort to gain new insights, parts of this thesis have been presented at multidisciplinary, international conferences. Some of them focused on Cuban Studies, and with a varied audience of Cuban, Cuban-American and foreign researchers. Through my participation in these conferences, I have come to realise the ideological tension that certain hot button discussions can produce, even in formal academic settings. I have witnessed multiple interpretations of historic events, some more academic, others clearly ideological, and learnt the importance of balance and academic robustness. Overall, I have learnt how to find my own voice and to feel comfortable with my own perspective, including the way in which my fieldwork in Cuba has shaped both my understanding of the revolutionary process, and my emotional involvement with the Island. This is further discussed in the section dedicated to my positionality as a researcher, chapter three.

Fidel Castro's Cuba and Hugo Chavez's Venezuela reached an agreement in 2004 that set up the exchange of Venezuelan oil for Cuban doctors, founding the 'Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America' (*Alianza Bolivariana Para los Pueblos de Nuestra América*, ALBA) in 2004. As other governments joined, ALBA became an intergovernmental project promoting economic, political and cultural collaboration based on social inclusion and mutual assistance. One of ALBA's joint projects has been the creation of the transnational media conglomerate TeleSUR, in which the governments of Venezuela, Cuba, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua all participate. Cuba also has forged strong academic networks with other Latin American countries, funding the degrees of disadvantaged students, and sending Cuban scholars to teach in rural areas. Furthermore, Latin American research in Social Sciences and Humanities reaches Cuban universities. In a context in which Cuba looks to restructure its political and media systems, previous literature indicates that Cuban academics are studying the media reforms that have been taking place in the region over the last years.

In this thesis, I argue that Cuba has historically played a key role in the symbolic construction of popular struggles in the region, which is at the heart of populism. The Cuban 1959 Revolution has become a political myth in the region, inspiring and shaping popular revolutions for equality and social justice throughout Latin America. Consequently, I claim that analysing the historical construction of 'the people' in the Cuban Revolution is essential for a full understanding of people's revolutionary demands in Latin America. The revolutionary myth of 1959 symbolises the re-foundation of a nation by 'the people' in a struggle against traditional corrupt systems. Fidel Castro himself has been a key figure in the construction of the Cuban myth, cultivating a class-based popular feeling of national pride to resist colonial and imperialist elites.

Numerous scholars have attempted to understand the roots of populism in Latin America throughout the 20th century. However, there are areas of research that have not yet been addressed. First, the study of populism in the region has focused on the so-called '*pure models*', which have set the basis for academic debate, such as Perón's Argentina and Hugo Chávez's Venezuela (Waisbord, 2003: 199). Most literature on populism has focused on archetypical examples of populist leadership, typically in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador or Venezuela, leaving wide areas of Central America and the Caribbean unexplored. This leads to curious gaps in the literature. For instance, while some of the so-called 'radical populist' leaders in Latin America have found their inspiration in Revolutionary Cuba, there is no previous research on Cuban populism. This could be closely linked to the marginalisation of the Island as a regional 'exception', which obeys its own internal logics, as well as the trend amongst researchers that deny the compatibility between populism and socialism. In any case, most research has been

conducted in democratic countries with minimum guarantees of freedom of speech, leaving unclear the relationship between populism and the news media in authoritarian populist regimes. Had other populist movements been studied as broadly, would current visions of populism in Latin America look significantly different?

In this thesis, I argue that populism has often been a taken-for-granted characteristic of Latin American governments. The focus on a new wave of populist governments in Latin America in the early 2000s, for instance, has become a sort of academic trend, generating considerable research. However, much of this research overlooks the meaning and validity of populism as an analytical tool. While most works on populism explain the challenges of defining this term, few attempt to reflect on the multiple academic conceptualisations of populism as essentially an economic, structural, political, or discursive phenomenon. This produces analytically and historically weak works on populist leaders, and populist media, which neither define populism nor look at the historical roots of people's frustrated demands, and the way in which political leaders articulate them over time.

This thesis expects to make a sound contribution to the study of populism in Latin America by highlighting the importance of the Cuban Revolution in the construction of the imaginaries of collective 'possibility' in the region. First, this thesis will demonstrate that the systematic exclusion of Cuba in the study of populism is not justified from a theoretical standpoint. Second, this thesis will examine the roots of populism, looking both at the concept itself and at the categories of 'the people' that it mobilises.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is organised in six chapters. Chapter one offers a historical contextualisation of the construction of a moral Cuban people, looking at the main elements that have articulated national belonging since the 19th century. Next, it examines the way in which the articulation of populist discourses of 'the people' has influenced cultural policies, and the degree of the institutional media's political independence throughout time. Finally, it discusses the relationship between media and populism in the Island.

The second chapter is dedicated to the discussion of populism. The first part offers an overview of different academic strands of research, and explains the importance of looking at populism from a discursive point of view. Therefore, this chapter develops a Laclauian approach to populism, explaining the main contributions and challenges that this analytical framework offers to the

study of populism. The second part of the chapter examines the relationship between media and populism, and the third part analyses relevant case studies in Latin America. Finally, the last part addresses the impact that recent debates on media, citizenship and populism in Latin America are having in Cuba.

Chapter three discusses the methodological underpinnings of this thesis. The first section of the chapter explains the case study. Then, the chapter goes on to discuss the analytical framework – discourse theoretical analysis – and the methodological rationale of the study. This chapter offers a detailed account of the way in which the data was sampled and analysed. Finally, I discuss my positionality as a foreign researcher in Cuba.

Chapters four, five, and six are dedicated to the analysis and discussion of the findings. All three chapters are organised around the analysis of five nodal points: (1) ‘the people’, (2) ‘the enemy’, (3) the leader, (4) the nation, and (5) journalism. The chapters present three different approaches to the discursive articulation of ‘the Cuban people’. Chapter four looks at the articulation of a historical antagonism between a united people and an external enemy in Cuban national newspaper *Granma*. This point is further discussed in chapter five from a logic of disarticulation, that is, from the discourses that challenge the revolutionary myth of Cubanness. Finally, chapter six looks at the nodal points that have sustained the hegemony of the revolutionary project through the lenses of Cuban journalists. Therefore, it explores the contradiction between journalist’s normative values and the revolutionary conceptualisation of national unity.

Chapter 1: The Origins of Cuban Populism

This chapter offers a historical overview of Cuba since the 1959 triumph of the Cuban Revolution. The aim is to contextualise the way in which the revolutionary leadership has maintained a discursive hegemony through the articulation of nodal points that respond to what Hawkins (2010) calls the ‘universal’ clusters of populism: (1) the people, (2) the enemy, (3) the leader and (4) the nation. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first examines the origins of Cuban national identity in the 19th century, differentiated from that of Spain. The core argument is that the principal elements that have provided consistency and stability to the 1959 Revolution’s hegemony have their origins in the independence wars. These elements are identified as nodal points, to use Ernesto Laclau’s term, and should be imagined as guiding principles in the discursive articulation of Cubanness.

The second part of this chapter offers a historical contextualisation of the Cuban Revolution, guided by the development of cultural and media debates. The section starts with the last years of Fulgencio Batista’s dictatorship, after leading the 1952 coup d’état. Next, the analysis focuses on the early instrumental view of artistic, cultural, and journalistic production. Following a Martíán conceptualisation of intellectuals as soldiers, the media system was conceived as an appendix of the Communist Party of Cuba (CCP), and an essential element in the populist articulation of a collective unity.¹⁴

This chapter discusses key events and actors in Cuban history that have contributed to the triumph of national sovereignty, and to the hegemony of the Revolution. While the context in which the IV and VI Congresses of the Communist Party of Cuba were held is discussed in the introduction, I will offer a general contextualisation in the following lines.

1.1 - The ‘Universal’ Clusters of Populism

Modern populism, as we know it, has its origins in the late 19th century in Russia and the United States. For instance, Kazin (1995) argues that by the late 18th century there was already a clear

¹⁴ The term Martíán refers to José Martí, a 19th century Cuban intellectual and revolutionary who led the insurrection against the Spanish colonial rule. Martí was the founder of the Cuban Revolutionary Party (*‘Partido Revolucionario Cubano’*) and fought during the Cuban War of Independence, dying on the battlefield before Cuba could reach independence. Martí is venerated as the father of Cuban Independence by Cubans at both sides of the Florida Straits, and of the political divide.

discursive distinction between the American elites and the common people. In political speeches, the elite was often presented as *'condescending, profligate, artificial, effete, manipulative, given to intellectual instead of practical thinking, and dependent on the labour of others'* (Kazin, 1995: 15). At the other extreme, absolute virtue resided in the ordinary people, in *'devout producers'* who had built a free United States. The idealisation of the popular classes led to an early condemnation of elitist discourses, which were considered as *'un-American'* behaviour (Kazin, 1995: 12). By the late 19th century, *'to talk in populist ways meant to favour a reassertion of "traditional" national principles, to fix good institutions'*, which had been ravaged by the elites (Kazin, 1995: 16). In order to do so, the 'real' nation had to be rhetorically purified. The People's Party built the basis of US populist discourse around an antebellum inheritance that included four thematic clusters: Americanism, 'the people', the elites, and popular mobilisation (Kazin, 1995: 11). Populist discourse sounded very much like the following quote from Ignatius Donnelly, speaking at the People's Party national convention in 1892:

We meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. Corruption dominates the ballot box, the Legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench. The people are demoralised. The newspapers are largely subsidised or muzzled, public opinion silenced, business prostrated, homes with mortgages, and the land concentrated in the hands of capitalists. The urban workmen are denied the right to organise for self-protection... The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for the few. (In Churchward, 1949: 38)

Certain scholars defend a minimalist conceptualisation of populism, grounded in the discursive opposition between a non-class-bound virtuous people and the egotistic and corrupt elites that govern them. For instance, Kazin (1995: 1) considers that *'whether orated, written, drawn, broadcast, or televised, this language is used by those who claim to speak for the vast majority of Americans who work hard and love their country'*. Other scholars, while maintaining the centrality of 'the people versus power contradiction', take into account other clusters of populist discourse. For instance, Demmers et al. (2001: 4) argue that neo-populist discourse fosters unity between 'the nation' and 'the people' through the figure of a father-like leader. In the Latin American context, previous research has highlighted the centrality of the personalistic leaders that mobilise 'the people' against the oligarchy, promising national redemption (Hawkins, 2009). In the following lines, I will go beyond a minimalist to populism, examining four clusters of populist discourse that have been pervasive in the Latin American context: 'the people', 'the enemy', 'the nation', and the 'leader'.

1.1.1 - Constructing ‘the People’ of Populism

This section will examine the minimal condition for the existence of populist discourse, that is, appeals to the people. The will of ‘the people’ has historically been conceived as the main source of political legitimacy, but also as the greatest threat to power (Bouvet, 2012: 23). However, Canovan (2005) sees ‘the people’ in a constant tension between myth and routine:

Of all the people’s ambiguities, it may be that the most crucial is its ambivalence between the everyday and the mythical: between the people as ordinary members of the population, and as transfigured into a People that has powers of political redemption. Oscillations between the two senses is common not only in populist rhetoric but throughout modern politics. (Canovan, 2005: 122)

Sartori (1965: 19) contends that ‘the people’ can become a ‘fetish’ that ‘demolaters’ use as a source of legitimisation. The problem is that demolatry –the cult of the people–, is not a synonym of ‘demophilia’ –the love for the people. For instance, after World War I three different forces – western democracies, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany– invoked ‘the people’ as the only legitimating political actor. Yet, ‘the people’ were framed in very different terms: ‘the people’ as representative democracy, as a social class, or as an ethnic nation (Bouvet, 2012: 99). While populist discourse claims to base political legitimacy on the will of ‘the people’, the literature shows that invoking popular sovereignty can serve both virtuous and dangerous purposes.

It has been claimed that, in the wake of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, traditional authorities such as God, the monarchy and political parties progressively lost legitimacy, leaving a gap that was filled by ‘the people’ (Canovan, 2005). However, the belief in ‘the people’ as the redeemers of democratic politics goes even further back in history. Etymologically, democracy comes from the ancient Greek term *demokratia*, that is, the power of the *demos*, or the power of ‘the people’. However, the ambiguity of the word leaves an essential element open to interpretation: who qualifies as a rightful part of the *demos*? In ancient Greece, the *demos* could refer to the whole political body (*plethos*), to the majority (*pleiones*) or to the mob (*ochlos*) (Sartori, 1965: 17, 18). Similarly, in ancient Rome, the term *populus* could also be used in appeals to the whole population or to part of it: the *plebs* –considered inferior to the patricians yet superior to slaves. The idea of people’s voice as the ultimate source of political legitimacy that was inherited from Rome did not imply a popular government. Whereas the leadership argued that it counted on people’s opinion, it did not grant ‘the people’ with direct political rights.

Almost a century into American independence, Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address of 1863 instituted the spirit of popular sovereignty as the '*government of the people, by the people, for the people*'. In this sense, 'the people', while being governed, symbolically became the source of political legitimacy (Morgan, 1989: 306). The contradiction of a popular government without direct popular participation set the conditions for the emergence of populism in the United States in the second half of the 19th century. This idea is reflected in the quote below:

Americans were the first in modern times to achieve popular government, and therefore the first to experience this disillusionment, this sense that the people's government had somehow escaped from the control of the people. (Canovan, 2005: 38)¹⁵

The mobilising power of populist discourse, whether the Populist Party or more contemporary cases, relies on people's frustration with the political system; on citizens' feeling that the roots of representative democracy might hide '*a conspiracy to keep power from the people*' (Canovan, 2005: 85). This idea is further illustrated in the following James Burnham quote:

If we examine not the verbal definitions that most people, including dictionary-makers, give for "democracy", but the way in which they use the word in practical application to affairs of our time, we will discover that it does not have anything to do with self-government. (In Sartori, 1965: 17)

Does representative democracy convey the ultimate will of 'the people'? And if the answer is no, should this be a normative ideal? The underlying question seems to be whether granting more sovereignty to 'the people' would benefit democracy, or threaten it. Historically, negative connotations of 'the people' are related to an elitist notion of the unruly mob –the great masses; the unwashed, uneducated and unsophisticated rabble–, which was seen to be naturally incapable of rational thought or moral judgement. According to this view, the masses could follow demagogic leaders and turn against the same democracy that gave them the right to sovereignty in the first place.

Mass psychology theories that arose in the late 18th and early 19th centuries were based on two key ideas: the fear of the uncontrollable masses, and the need to redirect their energies towards a constructive cause. Le Bon (1947) defined the political incorporation of the masses, both through universal suffrage and through a rising awareness of their associative power, '*the era of the*

¹⁵ Margaret Canovan (2005) argues that popular sovereignty, understood as a base for political legitimization, is a concept rooted in American independence (Canovan, 2005), which in turn emerged from the European intellectual liberalism.

crowds'. The fear of the masses was also recurrent in Ortega and Gasset's work *The Revolt of the Masses*, which saw the incorporation of the popular classes into political life during the 1930s as an occupation of spaces traditionally reserved for the educated elite.⁹ Both Le Bon (1947) and Ortega y Gasset (1998) assumed that the masses lacked the essential conditions for self-government. While they saw in the masses an innate instinct that could be directed towards the most noble goals, they considered that the masses often leaned towards immediate action, rather than reasoned decision-making. According to Le Bon, within a crowd, every member adopted elements of a primitive behaviour. Therefore, the philosopher considered that mass society would be open to charismatic domination through symbolic power.

The spontaneity, the violence, the ferocity, and also the enthusiasm and heroism of primitive beings, whom he further tends to resemble by the facility with which he allows himself to be impressed by words and images. (Le Bon, 1947: 32)

As mentioned above, the concept of 'the people' is ambiguous and open-ended. Therefore, appeals to 'the people' can be regarded with fear, or with enthusiasm. The main problem is that appeals to 'the people' tend to unify it under a shared core set of characteristics, interests, and identities. As understood by populist leaders, 'the people' convey an authentic and virtuous mass that conserves both moral authority and patriotism. Populist discourse, therefore, massifies 'a people' –ever changing–, converting it into a sacred object of worship (Taguieff, 2007: 10, 11).

Dupuy (2002: 177) argues that the very existence of the term 'populism' indicates its farcical nature. If populism referred simply to a movement emanating from the people, it would be enough to classify it as 'popular'. However, there are other elements at play: the mediation of the popular will by non-popular political actors. Populism becomes, therefore, a transposition of popular politics. In McGuian's (1992: 15) words, 'the people' are a discursive articulation that does not exist by itself: '*There are no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses*', of massing people according to competing power interests.

Ernesto Laclau (2006a) considers that the main goal of politics consists in the symbolic construction of 'the people'; of 'a people' who would ultimately give legitimacy to the hegemonic project. According to this view, populism naturalises a specific understanding of 'the people' that is not natural or predetermined, but historical and contingent. Whether it is the struggle for class or race equality, for sovereignty or for democracy, the nature of 'the people' is context-specific. 'The people' becomes, therefore a necessary but incomplete category in politics, and in populism. On the one hand, politicians claim to represent a universal will by invoking 'the people'. On the other hand, this is an impossible task because the symbolic construction of 'the

people' can never be sufficiently stable and all-encompassing so as to include a universal will. Therefore, politics are based on a discursive fiction that presents 'a people', pre-defined by the hegemonic project, as embodying all individual and collective struggles. This discourse is not seen to be normatively negative in Laclau's body of work, but as a necessary characteristic of politics.

As discussed in this section, the unavoidable indeterminacy of 'the people' as a political category means that it has always been exposed to competing hegemonic definitions, more or less inclusive depending on the context. Previous research has identified the main ways in which 'the people' are discursively articulated. For instance, Sartori (1965) proposes five conceptualisations: (1) 'the people' as an approximate plurality, a great many in which each one counts separately; (2) 'the people' as everybody, in which every person counts the same; (3) 'the people' as an organic whole in which each an individual counts for nothing; (4) 'the people' as an absolute majority in which only the majoritarian view counts, and (5) 'the people' as a limited majority principle, in which the voice of the minorities can be heard. Taguieff (2007) incorporates two more meanings that are often used in populist discourse: (6) 'the people' as the popular masses, 'the *plebs*', and (7) 'the people' as an ethnic identity, 'the *ethnos*'. The possibilities do not end there, and Ochoa Espejo (2017) considers that populist discourse has often conceptualised 'the people' as a taken for granted historical category, rather than a concept in permanent construction. According to this view, 'the people' is a discursive category created through '*an unfolding series of events coordinated by the practices of constituting, governing, or changing a set of institutions*' (Ochoa Espejo, 2017: 196).

Populist claims of incorporating the people's demands into politics could give the impression that populism favours an inclusive and egalitarian style of politics. However, 'the people' in populist discourse is not an all-inclusive category. Populism, just like democracy, has always been an elliptical expression, meaning the power of 'a people' over 'the people' (Sartori, 1965: 24). In this context, many questions arise: Which factors determine which people governs another? What are the implications of invoking 'the people' as an ethnic group, as a nation, or as a social class? (Taguieff, 2007: 107).

'The Cuban People': A Paradigm of Unity

If there is a Revolution that has claimed to be made in the name of 'the people', that is the Cuban Revolution. The construction of a united and heroic people, and of a sovereign and glorious Cuba,

has become the main source of national political legitimisation over time (de Diego Romero, 2003: 162). Since 1959, the leadership of 'the Revolution' sought to create a new revolutionary 'conscience' [*conciencia*], based on Che Guevara's idea of a 'new man', the Leninist model of the ideal citizen, and the values of guerrilla-like heroes (Bunk, 1994). In the official discourse, the masses were called to join the ranks of heroic leaders, to become one of them through their participation in the revolutionary process. 'The people' were to join national heroes through '*a proper set of revolutionary values, beliefs, and attitudes, such as dedication, selflessness, sacrifice, and loyalty*' (Bunk, 1994: 4).

Perhaps influenced by LeBon's (1947) and Ortega y Gasset's (1998) fear of the masses, some leaders of 'the Revolution' seemed to suspect that the masses were not yet ready to be true revolutionaries. For instance, González (1974: 67) argues that the *guerrillas* saw the masses as '*intrinsically non-revolutionary*', and therefore needing the guidance of those who had fought in Sierra Maestra against Batista's tyranny: '*a select core of intellectually superior and proven revolutionaries*'. The alleged moral superiority of revolutionary leaders can be identified in this quote from revolutionary leader Che Guevara, who argued that there were two differentiated groups in Cuba:

[T]he people, the still sleeping mass that had to be mobilised; and its vanguard, the guerrillas, the motor force of the mobilisation, the generator of revolutionary conscience and militant enthusiasm. (Guevara and Castro, 1989: 2)

In order to be politically incorporated, Cubans had to leave behind the alleged laziness, cruelty, irresponsibility and imbedded dishonesty that they had inherited from their Spanish and African roots. Then, they had to rid themselves of the materialistic and individualistic values that they adopted during the neo-colonial ruling of the United States. The leaders looked to '*tidy up the nation with a gigantic broom capable of sweeping away all the slag of Cuban society*' (Cabrera Álvarez, 2008: 7).

Over the first few years of 'the Revolution', Fidel Castro attempted to introduce a new morality based on his personal view of humanism. '*Humanism would bring about the moral uplift of all*', including backwards peasants, and conceited wealthy Cubans (Guerra, 2012: 39). Humanism was combined with a '*messianic call*' to replace the old morality by a new revolutionary one, based on the values of '*courage, selflessness, and unwavering faith*'. In this context, Fidel Castro became an example of moral values (Rivero, 2015: 133).

Under Fidel Castro's rule, 'the Revolution' grew into an attempt of radicalising and mobilising the population from above, under the directions of the leader's stringent control. The mobilisation of citizens in mass rallies and revolutionary mass organisations created a society in which the government mediated all public spaces of debate. This created the illusion that 'the Revolution' was led by an enthusiastic and committed people that followed the revolutionary path. A path that had been symbolically set by all Cuban revolutionaries that had fought for national independence. However, the top-down mobilisation of citizens led to a significant loss of citizens' cultural, political, and symbolic agency.

Throughout Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship (1952-1959), Fidel Castro had expressed publicly the need to restore democratic institutions and social justice. In the '*Pacto de Unidad*' announced on 20 July 1958, Fidel stressed that the goal of the armed struggle was the restoration of freedom and democratic procedures; the defence of workers' rights and the economic, social and institutional progress of Cubans; and the punishment of the dictatorship's supporters (Draper, 1965: 33). However, once in power, Fidel Castro changed his discourse and started referring to representative democracy as a system that systematically marginalises the voice of 'the people'. Following the Soviet model, the revolutionary government portrayed itself as the only political system able to represent the popular will (Bouvet, 2012: 101). While claiming to be all-encompassing, references to 'the people' were in fact references to 'a people': 'the people' as a nation, the common people, and the revolutionary people. In Fidel Castro's words, rephrasing Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address of 1863: the Cuban Revolution is '*the socialist and democratic Revolution of the humble people, with the humble and for the humble*', those whose hands are '*toughened by work*' (de Diego Romero, 2003: 167).

At this point of the discussion, I will argue that populism falls into a deep contradiction when it claims that 'the people' hold the ultimate truth and political will, while considering them politically and morally unready for participating in decision-making. In fact, populism can exalt popular mobilisation while maintaining a top-down overview of the process. According to Waisbord (2013b: 36), this could be explained by the nature of populism itself, which is '*an attempt at communicational and cultural hegemony from above*', from the state.

1.1.2 - 'The Enemy' in Populist Discourse

Populist appeals to 'the people', as defined by Canovan (1999), challenge the dominant ideas and values of society and, therefore, go against the structure of power that supports them, including democratic institutions, the academic world and the mass media. In most cases, populism can be

seen as a divorce between ‘the people’ and the political status-quo. One of the main characteristics of populist discourse is the division of society in two irreconcilable camps: ‘the people’ versus ‘the enemy’. The nature of ‘the enemy’ is contingent, and depends on the success of different hegemonic projects to successfully unify ‘the people’ in their fight against a common threat. From a Laclauian perspective, ‘the enemy’ is ‘the external other’ that is excluded from a populist articulation ‘the people’ (De Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2017). In the Latin American context, populism has become anti-bourgeois, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist, combining both right and left-wing characteristics (Germani, 1978: 88, 89). Some scholars appear to agree that there has been a discursive evolution in the construction of the populist enemy. Whereas classic populist leaders have criticised the oligarchy –national elites, colonial powers, imperialism– in particular, current populist leaders focus their criticism on elite values and democratic mediating channels, such as political parties, the mass media, and democratic checks and balances. In the case of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez defined his enemies as imperial powers, capitalists and status-quo politicians that impeded most people from having a say in politics:

The majority of the population is now in government, because the majority of the population has now the power and, with joy, with solidarity, with love for Venezuela’s Bolivarian revolution, this majority will not leave, it will stay. (In Patriau, 2012: 314)

In the case of Ecuador, the following excerpts illustrate Rafael Correa’s criticism of traditional institutions as well:

That’s enough, the citizens we are the owners of democracy, the owners of our country. Let’s finish with the dictatorship of those mafia that want to be called political parties, let’s finish with the abuses of a decadent Congress. (In Patriau, 2012: 310)

This excerpt further illustrates Correa’s point: ‘We will respect the sovereignty and dignity of the country. We will not allow the interference of arrogant international bureaucracies’ (In Patriau, 2012: 310).

The tension between ‘the people’ and an external elite that lies at the heart of populism can also be identified in the tone of the verbal exchanges between populist leaders and their political opponents. For instance, in 2006 Correa criticised his main opponent, Alvaro Noboa, for being ‘an exploitative, capitalist oligarch who would run the country as if it were one of his own banana plantations’ (in Conaghan and de la Torre, 2008: 273). Meanwhile, Noboa accused

Correa of being ‘*a dangerous leftist*’ and a colleague of Hugo Chávez’s (in Conaghan and de la Torre, 2008: 273).

As these quotes indicate, populist discourse tends to frame ‘the people’ as vulnerable in the face of a dangerous and powerful enemy, thereby reproducing a David versus Goliath antagonism (Patriau, 2012: 310). However, populist discourse does not appeal to ‘the people’ as an all-inclusive concept. While classic populist leaders, such as Ecuadorian leader José María Velasco Ibarra, appealed to a people whose political concerns had been largely ignored by the oligarchy, they excluded indigenous communities and the illiterate from ‘the people’ (Patriau, 2012: 308, 309). However, populist leaders in Latin America, such as Evo Morales in Bolivia or Rafael Correa in Ecuador, have not only included these indigenous communities, but have made indigenous peoples the symbol of true national virtue, the redeemers of politics as usual. For example, Evo Morales’ current electoral discourse in Bolivia identifies with the indigenous peoples, their ethnic identity and mythology. In Morales’ words:

It’s not about Evo Morales, it’s about a people. It’s not about persons, not about the Party. It’s about social movements, it’s about Quechua, Aymara, Guarani, specially, with their intellectuals, professionals, even business men. It is the people who wants to govern. As we said, we want to govern ourselves and we want to resolve our problems and change our country by ourselves. (in Patriau, 2012: 312)

‘The Enemy’ of Cubans: A Sieged-Society Paradigm

Populist discourse tends to divide society into two irreconcilable camps: ‘the people’ –those who invoke ‘the people’ and their supporters–, against ‘the enemy’. The existence of a populist ‘them’, of a non-people, of an enemy, is exactly what privileges the antagonistic nature of populism in Laclau’s body of theory. Therefore, populist appeals to ‘the people’ have always been accompanied by appeals to the nation’s enemies (real or imagined), promoting reciprocal feelings of anger. In this context, populist discourse tends to frame ‘the people’ as vulnerable in the face of a looming threat. However, from a discourse theoretical approach, the populist ‘people’ is not an all-inclusive concept.

In Cuba, Fidel Castro’s ‘Words to the Intellectuals’ in 1961 have become the guiding definition of intellectual freedom, as well as the main definition of the revolutionary belonging: ‘*Inside the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing*’ (Castro Ruz, 1961). Tony Kapcia (2014: 185) highlights the ‘asymmetrical binary’ of ‘inside’ and ‘against’, accepting those who do not actively support the project, as long as they do not actively oppose it. Therefore, real

revolutionary Cubans were expected not only to remain within the revolutionary limits of belonging, but to fight those who were against it. According to Kapcia the creation of a frontier between ‘us’, the revolutionaries, and ‘them’, ‘the enemy’, in the early years of ‘the Revolution’ was a necessary condition for the consolidation of a national identity, and a key for achieving an active political mobilisation (González, 1974: 23).

According to Rafael Hernández (2003: 22), Cuban scholar and head of the academic journal *Temas*, the main problem is that the discursive construction of unity has created a culture of secrecy, in which reality is expressed through a series of euphemisms, taboos, and silences, whereas the discursive construction of ‘the enemy’ has brought about a ‘*phobia of debates*’, based on the assumption that divergent opinions could divide, create resentment and offer a weak image of the revolutionary consensus. Whereas Fidel’s ‘Words to the Intellectuals’ remained relatively flexible, in practice, the extreme polarisation between ‘the people’ and the enemies has affected all intellectual work, including the arts, academic research, and the media. The difference is that, whereas the cultural world achieved relative independence early on in the ‘Cultural Polemics’ of the 1960, the media was seen to be the main apparatus for educating, guiding, and mobilising the masses. Therefore, it was reduced to an instrument of the ideological struggle, and forced to renounce its professional values for the larger political goals (Marrero, 2006; García Luis, 2013).

1.1.3 - Populism and Charismatic Leadership

After gaining independence, most Latin American countries failed to create a strong centralised state. For this reason, over the course of the 19th century, caudillos, charismatic strongmen, skilled at mediating between the hegemonic sectors of government left in place by colonial powers and ‘the people’, were swept into power (Laclau, 1977: 182; Löwy, 1987: 4). The figure of the ‘caudillo’ often appears in the literature as an early precursor of ‘*leaders of the people*’ or populist leaders (Weyland, 1995: 26; Di Tella, 1997: 48).

According to Le Bon (1947: 19) most charismatic leaders, such as Napoleon, are ‘*unconscious psychologists*’ able to read the minds of the crowds. Certain characteristics shared by these successful leaders can often sound extremely similar to those of populist leaders:

Given to exaggeration in its feelings, a crowd is only impressed by excessive sentiments. An orator wishing to move a crowd must make an abusive use of violent affirmations. To exaggerate, to affirm, to resort to repetitions, and never to attempt

to prove anything by reasoning are the methods of argument well known to speakers at public meetings. (Le Bon, 1947: 51)

According to this vision, crowds seem to understand only simple and direct messages designed to dazzle them and restore their faith. Le Bon (1947: 57, 68) continues, asserting that the crowds are impressed with '*theatrical representations*' that put patriotism, honour and past glories on stage. However, the similarities do not stop there, since '*on the stage a crowd demands from the hero of the piece a degree of courage, morality, and virtue that is never to be found in real life*' (Le Bon, 1947: 51). Therefore, a characteristic of populist leaders is often their capacity to represent the moral salvation of their nation, rescuing the long-lost honest and traditional values that had been ravaged by the oligarchy. Quoting Robespierre, '*if the representative body is not pure and nearly identified with the people liberty is lost*' (in Jaume, 2007: 11).¹² One example of this discourse is Fujimori's choice of '*Honesty, technology and work*' as a slogan for his 1989 campaign (Rojas Huerta et al., 2009: 149).

Canovan (1998: 73) wonders whether it is possible to maintain the harmony of a collective nation beyond the image of a unifying charismatic leader. To this question, Dupuy (2002) responds that movements born from popular discontent can only last if they dispose of a charismatic leader, able to entertain citizens discursively, sustain their enthusiasm and eliminate any institutional obstacles (media, democratic institutions, traditional parties, etc.) in representing the popular will. Representation means for Pitkin '*acting for others*', and for Derrida, '*acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them*' (in Arditì, 2007: 63).

Populism often arises from a crisis of representation, when elites are unwilling or unable to respond to people's concerns (Arditì, 2007: 62). Therefore, the construction of 'the people' is often accompanied by the unifying symbolism of a leader that is able to connect with popular demands and to temporarily disguise their own incompleteness, becoming himself an empty signifier (Laclau, 2005a: 99-100). In this context, populist leaders try to break the gap between the represented and the representatives, claiming to speak in the name of 'the people' through an antithetic '*us*' and '*them*' (Laclau, 2005a). This presumed immediacy allegedly transforms the leader into the incarnation of popular will, and requires no further '*rational*' legitimization for his exercise of power (Arditì, 2007: 66). This situation can be more obvious in audience democracies, in which '*virtual immediacy*' produces an imaginary identification with the leader, thereby enhancing popular trust (Manin, 1997). Whereas populists argue that the leader is the only person capable of faithfully representing the popular will, they hide the fact that they are mediating the popular will themselves and, consciously or unconsciously, distorting it.

Populist leaders often present themselves as prophets, as mediums, as saviours ready to purge society from wrongdoing through a purification process that will miraculously transform society. Consequently, they claim to possess special attributes. For example, they present themselves as possessing a great intellect, empathy for the oppressed, charity, clairvoyance, moral rectitude, or even saintliness. Furthermore, Weyland (2010) considers populism has a gendered nature since its leaders exhibit a deliberately masculine image. According to Kampwirth (2010), models of masculinity in populism have traditionally included the '*vulgar man*' (Chávez, Bucaram), '*the athlete*' (Bucaram, Collor), '*the military man*' (Lázaro Cárdenas, Chávez, Ortega, Perón), priests or even Jesus Christ (Sánchez de Cerro, Haya de la Torre, Chávez, Perón, Bucaram). However, the '*father*' remains one of the most common metamorphoses (Conniff, 1999a: 199). This father-like stereotype, according to Kampwirth (2010), has strong connotations of being '*wise, brave, strong, responsible protective...*', but it inevitably turns citizens into children in need of guidance. For instance, when the Peruvian people elected Sánchez Cerro as president in 1930, he became commonly known by his followers as '*patrón*' or '*padre protector*', that is, a boss or protective father guided by infinite faith, affection and love (Stein, 1999: 99-101).

While most scholars consider charisma a necessary ingredient in populism (Weyland, 2001), others consider the exercise of a strong and personalistic leadership to be sufficient (Dix, 1985: 43-45). One of the differences between classical populism and neo-populism would precisely be the changing nature of the leaders' charisma, since the mediatisation of politics and sophisticated marketing campaigns facilitate the presentation of non-charismatic leaders as charismatic ones.

Leadership in the Cuban Revolution

It has been argued that the rhetoric of Hugo Chavez, one of the chief representatives of populism in the 21st century, was inspired by the figure of Fidel Castro. For instance, in 2005, during an interview with the Cuban official newspaper, *Granma*, the former Venezuelan leader referred to Fidel as follows: '*Fidel for me is a father, a companion, a master of the perfect strategy*' (Gómez, 2016:1). Therefore, it is surprising that Castro's discourse examined from a populist perspective has largely been overlooked. In one of the few studies on this, de Diego Romero (2003) analyses the discourse of Castroism and finds at least three elements of populism. First, Fidel Castro considered that 'the Revolution' had finally materialised the will of 'the people', which had been historically marginalised. Second, 'the Revolution' defined and demonised a clear enemy, that is, the traditional elites linked to the political and commercial interests of the United States. Finally, Fidel Castro presented and constructed himself as a national hero.

The national-populist exhalation of the nation and the virtues of ‘the people’ against national and foreign elites has been present not only in the discourse of the Cuban Revolution, but also in Nicaragua’s Sandinista Revolution. In Cuba and Nicaragua, the symbolic monopoly was limited to the ‘true’ representatives of ‘*the people*’, embodied by Fidel Castro and the FSLN Party respectively (de Diego Romero, 2003: 175). More recently, the hegemonic construction of a ‘good national people’ against an elitist evil enemy has been identified in Kirchner’s Argentina, Chávez’s Venezuela, or Correa’s Ecuador (de Diego Romero, 2003; Patrouilleau, 2010).

According to Mujal-León and Lagenbacher (2008: 53), nationalism, anti-Americanism and the personality cult of Fidel would have been more relevant in Cuban politics than the communist ideology: ‘*Castro had neither a coherent plan at the outset, nor a developed doctrine, nor a comprehensive program beyond the overthrow of Fulgencio Batista*’. In fact, Draper (1965: 71) provocatively argues that Fidel Castro reached power with one ideology, and maintained control with another. In summary, it is argued that Castro’s nationalist rhetoric, personal charisma, and ideological elasticity might have helped ensure the survival of ‘the Revolution’ after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Hoffmann, 2011a).

De Diego Romero considers Fidel Castro’s speeches and slogans ‘*real discursive events*’ with the goal of constructing, enhancing and reminding his followers of the new collective identity (2003: 163). One example of this could be the famous slogan ‘*Homeland or death! We will win!*’ (de Diego Romero, 2003: 169). For instance, Fidel’s 1968 discourse in Demajagua, commemorating the 10-year-long Spanish-Cuban war is considered by de Diego Romero to be a standing example of the cultural construction of the Cuban Revolution. In this discourse, the Cuban nation is defined as a collective body of common interest and destiny built by the fight for freedom against the Spanish colonial power and the US quest for domination (de Diego Romero, 2003: 164). In Fidel’s) words:

A hundred years ago, this conscience did not exist; a hundred years ago, the Cuban nationality did not exist; a hundred years ago, ‘the Cuban people’ did not exist in the sense of a shared interest and a shared destiny. (Castro Ruz, 1968)

According to de Diego Romero (2003) Fidel Castro’s traditional legitimation strategies are complemented by the charismatic domination of himself. Therefore, the scholar asserts that ‘Fidelism’, that is, ‘*the mere confidence on Castro’s qualities as a charismatic man*’, has been a sound legitimating factor used throughout decades, disagreeing with the Weberian idea that a leader’s inherent values are not essential factors for his popular legitimisation (de Diego Romero, 2003: 169). Some of the special characteristics attributed to Fidel have included physical force,

chauvinism (understood as ‘*machismo*’), courage and oratory qualities (González, 1974: 169-170). For instance, Willner (1984: 72-74) considers that his work as a volunteer in sugar plantations also helped to construct an image of Fidel as a charitable man, as a ‘*returning apostle*’ of the people. Another unique characteristic of Fidel would be his quasi-magical ability to hold power in a David versus Goliath-like battle. As Cuban journalist in exile Alejandro Armengol explains:

It was Mr Castro's titanic talent for getting under the skin of the American presidents what made him a hero throughout much of the third world. Even today, that popularity survives in large parts of Latin America. (in García Santamaría, 2012: 60)

1.1.4 - The Historical Articulation of the Nation

While left-wing ideologies tend to associate ‘the people’ with a specific social class, conservative positions tend to speak of ‘the people as nation’ (Waisbord, 2013b: 22). As I have shown, populism uses both conceptions of ‘the people’, which stresses its ideological and contradictory flexibility. In this sense, Anderson (2006) contends in his book *Imagined Communities* that forms of nationalism, such as populism, cannot be defined as an ideology, although they can be adopted by different ideologies in different contexts. Nairn (2003) asserts that both populism and nationalism became a pervasive phenomenon in the 19th century during a moment in which the masses started claiming direct participation in political life:

[T]he arrival of nationalism in a distinctively modern sense was tied to the political baptism of the lower classes. Their entry into history furnished one essential precondition of the transformation of nationality into a central and formative factor. And this is why, although sometimes hostile to democracy, nationalist movements have been invariably populist in outlook and sought to induct lower classes into political life. (Nairn, 2003: 28-29)

According to Michael Wieviorka (in Dupuy, 2002: 178) populism is often a by-product of nationalism that takes place when a portion of the electorate is unable to find an answer to their social or economic problems through classical institutional channels, therefore identifying the traditional elites as perpetrators of national betrayal. In this context, populism has served as a mythical discursive strategy for narrowing the gap between ‘the people’ and a charismatic leader,

charged with the mission of deciphering the popular will and guiding citizens towards a glorious future (Dupuy, 2002: 178).

Leaders have used both populism and nationalism as strategies to harmonise fragmented popular demands around a new core of national and cultural pride. After the independence movements in the Americas, loyalty to the nation became the basis of a new cultural model for building new norms and values, as well as participation in national life (Germani, 1978: 9). In this context, classic populist leaders proclaimed the principles of race, blood and soil as elements of national identity. Therefore, populist discourses have often abused the symbolic exaltation of national values, such as national history, national heroes, traditions, identity or natural resources, usually presented as the authentic, the pure essence of the nation that has been distorted by the elite. Recently, Ecuador's president Rafael Correa has used the slogan '*now the Homeland belongs to everyone*' ('*La patria ya es de todos*'), representing the populist incorporation of popular demands into politics (Conaghan and de la Torre, 2008).

The difficulty of defining nationhood makes it a mythical, abstract and elastic term. According to Canovan (1998: 50), there are five approaches to nationhood: (1) nations as states, (2) as cultural communities, (3) as the subjective identities of individual citizens or (4) as ethnic groups. Nationhood was (5) separated from a religious-monarchical identity in the context of modernisation that followed the British post-civil war. Whichever sense is attributed to nationhood, it seems to offer pragmatic politics a sense of '*warm, intimate togetherness*' (Canovan, 1998: 69, 71). In Anderson's words: '*It is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny*' (2006: 22). The semantic elasticity combined with the inherited familiarity of nationhood gives appeals to the nation the power to create political communities that can be mobilised, represented and exercise power in the name of '*our*' national destiny (Tudor, 1972). The particularity of national communities seems precisely to be this apparent '*naturalness*', capable of creating a reservoir of easily mobilised and organised political forces (Canovan, 1998: 68).

Canovan (2005: 132) prefers the definition of nationhood as a myth rather than an invention, since it is fruit of a collective imagination. According to Tudor (1972: 41), a political myth is the collective story of a political entity, whether a state or a party, summoned to explain its past through a combination of parable and reality. Political myths can serve to justify or denounce past or present political measures, promote a collective identity, and set patterns for future collective behaviour. The power of political myths lies precisely in their ability to adapt to different goals and circumstances. Tudor (1972) considers two types of myths in a nation's past: the foundational myth and the revolutionary myth.

Foundational myths, which tell the story of how ‘the people’ founded a nation and obtained popular sovereignty in a struggle against the tyrants, are useful evocative tools in the collective memory, according to Canovan (2005: 124, 125). The scholar considers that, when a nation undergoes a period of popular unrest, appealing to national myths enables the leadership to unify popular demands, and to mobilise them at once. Therefore, when these episodes occur, they can become myths, symbolic of the virtue of the nation in the face of ‘the enemy’. The popular energy that this myth is capable of channelling will remain stowed away, ready to be used when needed. This could be the case of former colonies that fought for their independence, such as the Haiti’s early independence from the French colonial power or the Cuban Revolution’s victory against US imperialism.

Finally, Schopflin (in Canovan, 2005: 129) considers that television has increased the visibility of political myths and has facilitated the dramatisation of moments of collective popular heroism. An example of this would be the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In this case, television helped to instil in collective minds the belief that ‘the people’ were taking collective action against ‘the enemy’ by broadcasting the images of demonstrators in Leipzig chanting ‘*Wir sind das Volk*’, or ‘*We are the People*’ worldwide.

Nationalism and Historical Remembrance in Cuba

Muñoz Kiel and Nápoles Rodríguez (2006: 203) argue that the 1959 Revolution symbolically redeemed all the impossibilities that Cubans had faced after a century of thwarted battles. These impossibilities included national independence and sovereignty, and victory against colonial and post-colonial powers. The importance of ‘the Revolution’ consisted precisely in making what seemed historically impossible, that is, national independence, a real imagined possibility. Therefore, belief in victory became a means for achieving sovereignty. This idea is present in Guerra’s work, in which she highlights the importance of symbolic constructions of possibility:

Discourse did not merely serve as background for events; discourse shaped events and conditioned outcomes by shaping people’s perceptions of what was possible and by conditioning at key junctures, especially in early battles with the United States, what they could say or do in response to events, including those beyond their control. (Guerra, 2012: 3)

Several scholars, such as Rivero (2015) and Pérez (2013), consider that US media’s fascination with Fidel Castro and the Sierra Maestra rebels was essential for constructing early ‘*spectacles of revolution*’ that would remain in people’s minds over time. One of the main contributions of US

media attention to the Cuban rebels was marketing the triumph of ‘the Revolution’ as a possibility, both inside and outside the Island. More specifically, Herbert L. Matthews’ *New York Times* 1957 first report on the rebel army in Sierra Maestra is seen to be key in the early mediated construction of Fidel Castro’s movement (Ratliffe, 1987). Some scholars go as far as to suggest that Herberts’ sympathetic coverage was essential for the revolutionary victory in 1959 (Guerra, 2012). In any case, US media coverage contributed to spread the charisma of Fidel Castro and the rebel army, who became ‘celebrities’ long before the triumph of ‘the Revolution’ (Rivero, 2015: 124). Once in power, Fidel Castro used constant televised appearances (ranging from one to eight per month, and often obstructing other programming) in order to spread his glamour, which was then reappropriated by the state (Rivero, 2015: 146). The representation of Fidel Castro on television and in photographs, surrounded by other revolutionary leaders and addressing a multitude of supporters, was key for constructing an imagery of unity, and mass support.

There is widespread agreement on the fact that the main source of political legitimacy was nationalism, and not socialism. The 1959 Revolution was seen as the culmination of national sovereignty, defending the honour of the Island after 4 centuries of Spanish colonial rule and 60 years of US military and economic imperialism (Bell Lara and Dell Buono, 2005; Quiroga, 2005; Vitier, 2006; Guanche, 2009; Lambie, 2010; Kapcia, 2014). While de Diego Romero (2003) sees pre-1959 Castroism as a ‘moderate’ ideology (when compared with other leftist and openly communist movements on the Island), it was the US invasion of the Bay of Pigs in 1961 and the imposition of an economic blockade in 1962 that convinced Fidel Castro to seek protection from the Soviet Union, and to declare himself a Marxist-Leninist in 1961 (López Segrera, 2011: 4). For Guerra (2012) the confrontation with the United States in the early 1960s laid the groundwork for a revolutionary ideology that was much more ‘radical’ than in the early days.

The beginning of the independence wars in 1868 is often seen in Fidel Castro’s discourses as the foundational moment in which national awareness was born, constructing ‘the people’ as ‘*all those who rose up in arms against the Spanish colony*’ (de Diego Romero, 2003: 164). The discursive references to mythic liberation figures such as Carlos Manuel Céspedes, Antonio Maceo or José Martí became a recurrent source of legitimacy by Castro, who portrayed himself as finishing their mythical fight (de Diego Romero, 2003: 165; Vitier, 2006). Therefore, Fidel used a traditional type of Weberian legitimisation, based on the ancestral tradition of heroism and revolutionary values inherent to ‘the Cuban people’. Years later, Kennedy’s failed attempt to invade Cuba in Playa Girón became a clear example of the hostility of ‘the enemy’, and the heroism of ‘the people’. Girón would appear thereafter as a recurrent element in Fidel Castro’s

speeches. The literature suggests that nationalism was the main source of political legitimisation, enhancing the foundational values that guided the late 19th-century independence wars.

The 1959 Revolution was presented as the fulfilment of centuries of failed battles for freedom. This is intrinsically related to a particular reading of history, which presented the moral values of the ‘new man’ as tools for the construction of a glorious future. The prophetic use of historic victories so as to predict future achievements is what Quiroga (2005: 28) calls the ‘*oracular use of history in the future perfect*’. Invincibility, and eternal victory, became the official historical narrative of ‘the Revolution’, bringing about a way of speaking of the future that concealed the possibility of failure. Therefore, this thesis argues that Cuban Independence and the Cuban Revolution have become foundational myths in the revolutionary political discourse.

1.2 - Media and Populism in Cuba

In this chapter, I have argued that there are five main nodal points that can explain the articulation of unity in the Cuban national press: (1) ‘the people’, (2) ‘the enemy’, (3) the leader, (4) the nation, and (5) journalism. The previous section has examined the meaning of ‘the people’, ‘the enemy’, the leader and the nation in populist discourse, and has contextualised these in the Cuban context. This section will focus on the fifth nodal point: Cuban journalism. The following lines will examine the roots and the values of the Cuban media system from a historical perspective.

This thesis looks at the strategies of populist articulation that have taken place in the Cuban national newspaper, *Granma*, and the way in which they have helped to maintain the hegemonic project of the Cuban Revolution. This is not to assume that the revolutionary project has maintained a stable communicational hegemony thanks to the media construction and dissemination of populist discourses. Far from taking a simplistic approach, this thesis looks at the interplay between populist and institutional logics of political articulation, and their fluctuation over time.

Ernesto Laclau defends the theoretical construction of a pluralist, radical democracy that goes beyond the hegemonic project of contemporary capitalism. According to this project, ‘*the possibility of a radical democracy is directly linked to the level and extension of structural dislocations operating in contemporary capitalism*’ (Howarth, 2015: 33). However, could structural dislocation potentially democratise socialist societies, such as Cuba? Following Howarth’s (2015) line of thought, the construction of a radical-democratic socialist project on the Island would depend on the degree to which existing structures of meaning, and subject identities,

are dislocated. The greater the dislocation, the greater the political indeterminacy of the system that would follow.

Howarth (2015: 34) differentiates between the concepts of political contradiction and dislocation. Contradiction comes from an internal political crisis that can be solved through self-transformation. However, dislocation refers to a crisis that is external to the system in place, and which enables structural transformations, such as the creation of new subject identities and the expansion of political possibilities. In the Cuban case, ‘the Revolution’ has been able to face internal contradictions within the institutional channels provided by the system, such as promoting debate among militants. However, certain events can dislocate the existing structure, and require an articulation of meaning that facilitates the creation of new subjectivities. Processes of potential dislocation seem to be more likely to spark Party-led periods of popular debate. Therefore, I argue that the Party-led promotion of popular debate can be understood as (1) a sign of potential dislocation, and (2) an attempt to discursively articulate the dislocative threat as a simple contradiction that can be solved within the existing institutional mechanisms –avoiding further structural changes. The organisation of national debates can be seen as an attempt at hegemonic renewal, rearticulating existing structures and subjective identities without risking structural changes that could endanger the revolutionary project.

Under the leadership of Raúl Castro, the Cuban government has encouraged debate and self-criticism at all levels, including the way in which the media operate and journalism is practised on the Island (PCC, 2012). According to official documents, these efforts are intended to foster a renewal of journalistic practices in the so-called context of ‘Updating the Economic and Social Model’ (*Actualización del Modelo Económico y Social*). In a context of change, the media have been asked to report on citizens’ concerns posed by market-oriented economic reforms, warming US-Cuban relations, the gradual disappearance of Fidel Castro from public life, and the erosion of the traditional state-media hegemony (Castro Ruz, 2011). These changes, both internal and external to ‘the Revolution’, have generated considerable debate among journalists, bloggers and academics, who want to extend the ‘Updating’ spirit to the ideological sphere. Nevertheless, political and journalistic debates have yet to produce tangible changes in the way in which journalism performs as a social practice (González García, 2012: 20-27; Garcés, 2013: 10-11; Elizalde, 2014; Oller Alonso and Olieria Pérez, 2016).

The following lines will examine the historical factors that have shaped Cuban journalism, and journalists’ subjective positions. Journalism is one of the five nodal points that are examined in

this thesis, which aims at understanding the way in which *Granma* has articulated the role of ‘the Cuban people’ in times of national debate.

1.2.1 - The Roots of the Revolutionary Media System

This section will examine the impact of the Cuban Revolution in the media system that was in place throughout the last years of Fulgencio Batista’s government (1952 to 1959). Pre-revolutionary Cuba had media systems characterised for their advanced technological development that made the Island a leading example of modernisation in Latin America (Rivero, 2015). While radio broadcasting was institutionalised in Cuba in 1922, it was through commercial television that the Island became a model of progress. Taking technology as a symbol of development, ‘*the broadcasting of modernity*’ that took place during the 1950s became a tool for disseminating certain ideals of ‘*progress, decency, democracy*’ that were inspired by modernisation ideals in the United States. According to Puerto Rican scholar Yeidy Rivero (2015), the Cuban broadcasting system was modelled after US ideals, yet it reproduced racial and class-based social structures from the colonial era. The scholar argues that ‘*the ideology of Cuban homogeneity and equality operated in a discursive conjunction of heterogeneity and difference*’ (2015: 6). In this sense, Cuban television became a tool for advancing modernity through ‘*spectacles of decency*’, positioning Cuban intellectuals and the elite on the side of Western ideals of high culture and morality, while constructing the black ‘other’ as uncivilised; as a obstacle to development (Rivero, 2015: 6-9).

Before Fulgencio Batista’s 1952 coup, some scholars consider that there was a civil society in Cuba, and that the media enjoyed certain pluralism and political influence (Hernández, 2008b; Guerra, 2012). However, Batista’s administration targeted the media as an extension of state power, and did not hesitate to bribe journalists and newspapers in exchange for positive coverage. According to Guerra (2012: 40), only six out of sixty newspapers in Cuba managed to make a living from subscriptions and advertising, while the rest relied on bribes. The corruption of the media industry reached such levels that, once the revolutionary leaders took power, many citizens saw the media model as a great challenge for the new government (Guerra, 2012: 40).

Batista’s dictatorship combined periods of open censorship with periods that granted certain rights to journalists. This fluctuation demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining both communicational hegemony and legitimacy, especially when the guerrilla leaders supported a return to constitutional democracy (Guerra, 2012; Rivero, 2015). However, towards the end of Batista’s rule, the context tilted the balance towards greater control of the media. Some

contextual factors could have influenced Batista's decision. For instance, the arrival of Fidel Castro's boat, 'Granma' in 1956, journalist Herbert L. Matthews' passionate coverage of the Sierra Maestra leaders for *The New York Times* (refuting rumours that Fidel Castro had died), and widespread violence and repression across the Island. While formal censorship was legalised between August 1957 and January 1958, Rivero (2015: 107) argues that the silencing of dissent and repression lasted until the victory of 'the Revolution' in January 1959.

While ideals of democracy, progress and decency were invoked both by the Fulgencio Batista's government as well as by the revolutionary guerrilla, both groups interpreted them in a very different light. Therefore, normative western ideas were adapted to the Cuban context, and to the interests of competing hegemonic projects. Before the triumph of 'the Revolution', the rebels had already established a mostly clandestine media network that disseminated propaganda and ideology, denouncing the crimes of Batista's government, and boosting the morale of anti-Batista activists. The network included the newspapers *Revolución*, the official bulletin of the '26 July Movement' (*Movimiento 26 de Julio*), *Alma Mater*, which belonged to the Federation of University Students (*Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios*, FEU), and the station '*Radio Rebelde*', inaugurated by Che Guevara on 24 February 1958 (Muñoz Kiel and Nápoles Rodríguez, 2006).

The triumph of 'the Revolution' continued to use the role of television as a tool for advancing modernity (Rivero, 2015). However, the narratives that characterised Batista's period were soon replaced by '*spectacles of revolution*' (Rivero, 2015: 134). After 'the Revolution', modernity started being measured not by the technical superiority of Cuban media, but by the degree to which technology could serve revolutionary values (Rivero, 2015: 137). By the time Fidel Castro arrived in Havana on 8 January 1959 –having spent a week crossing the country in a 'Caravan of Victory'–, all ninety-four radio stations and eleven television stations simultaneously aired Fidel's address to the nation. In doing so, the media helped to construct a single narrative of victory with a single leading voice: that of Fidel Castro (Guerra, 2012: 41).

Despite Batista's attempts to control the Cuban media, some scholars acknowledge that the Island had a relatively plural and dynamic media environment at the triumph of 'the Revolution' (Fornet, 2007; Guerra, 2012; Kumaraswami, 2016). While corruption characterised pre-revolutionary journalism, the new leadership branded transparency as the defining element of revolutionary journalism. A transparency that was coherent with the discourse of a moral and clean government that should have nothing to hide (Guerra, 2012; Rivero, 2015). In this context,

Cuban intellectuals from a variety of ideological and aesthetic origins consciously engaged in a 'moral compromise' with the Project (Leyva and Somohano, 2008: 46).

Once in power, the new government legalised clandestine media outlets, such as the newspapers *Revolución* (belonging to the '26 July Movement'), its Monday cultural supplement '*Mondays of Revolution*' (*Lunes de Revolución*), and *Hoy*, which belonged to the Popular Socialist Party. They also created an international press agency, *Agencia Prensa Latina*, as well as the magazine, *Verde Olivo*, linked to the rebel army.

The value of the media for disseminating the new ideas was clear from the outset. Henceforth, one of the first measures of the revolutionary government was to suppress the 'subsidies' –or bribes– received by traditional media outlets. Instead, the State became a client of these media and institutions. The government bought whole pages of newspapers and significant spaces on television and radio, paying propaganda fees, and hired advertisement agencies to produce new commercials. In the midst of this whirl, the revolutionary government came up with a series of public events, marathons, and press conferences that the media had no choice but to diffuse. Rebel *barbudos* (bearded revolutionaries) would take over people's screens, radios, and the front pages of the newspapers (Muñoz Kiel and Nápoles Rodríguez, 2006: 212-213).

The first two years of the revolutionary government were key for defining and constructing belonging as '*a straight, tangible, unequivocal line, between today and yesterday, or between the inside and the outside*' (Muñoz Kiel and Nápoles Rodríguez, 2006: 205). Therefore, the symbolism of early mass rallies of seemingly unconditional supporters, the unobstructed dismantling of the US cultural and economic hegemony, as well as the military victory of the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion were shaped in people's imaginations and legitimised the official discourse of unity and eternal victory (Guerra, 2012: 5).

Over the first few years of 'the Revolution', Fidel Castro used mass gatherings in public squares both as proof of popular support, and as a means to build a national imagery of unity (Guerra, 2012). Mass rallies were presented as facilitating 'direct democracy', allowing direct communication between the leaders and 'the people'. Important political decisions were often communicated live in public squares, eroding the role of the media as intermediaries. Bermúdez (2006) argues that Fidel Castro's discourses united all Cubans physically at the Plaza, or virtually in front of the radio or television, where citizens listened to the orator's speeches. Guerra (2012: 45) describes an environment of national public fascination. '*The Revolution was the Square: the source of all communication, of all power. The speaker, the medium; Television, the media*' (Bermúdez, 2006: 245). For instance, Cuban intellectual Ambrosio Fornet (2007: 6) recalls that in

the early years of ‘the Revolution’ he had no other ideology than ‘Fidelism’, and that he had become a Marxist through the television, whilst listening to the leader (de Diego Romero, 2003). Fidel Castro’s ability to connect with the masses was noted by Ernesto Che Guevara, who described public speeches as spectacles that produced synchronic revolutionary vibrations:

In great public gatherings, you can observe something that resembles the dialogue between two tuning forks, whose vibrations produce new ones in the interlocutor. Fidel and the mass start vibrating in a dialogue of increasing intensity until reaching the climax in an abrupt finale, consummated by our cries of struggle and victory.
(Guevara and Castro, 1989: 11)

Fidel Castro’s speeches were broadcast, and then reproduced in full print in Carlos Franqui’s newspaper *Revolución* (a tradition that would then be continued by *Granma* after the 1965 reorganisation of the press). Televised images and photographs strengthened the presence of these almost mystical revolutionary leaders that had fought for years in the Sierra Maestra mountains, contributing to the legitimisation of the new leadership:

[T]he mass media became fundamental means for the expression of the new society that was being constructed in Cuba: they mediated public debate, and from them the masses were called to participate in and cooperate with the Revolution. (Muñoz Kiel and Nápoles Rodríguez, 2006: 213)

The leaders’ early awareness of the importance of using the mass media to their advantage can be seen in the so-called ‘Operation Truth’. Amidst international accusations of human rights violations, Fidel Castro invited over 300 international journalists to hear what ‘the people of Cuba’ had to say about the alleged torture of Batista prisoners. On 21 January, over a million-people approached the Presidential Palace and its surroundings. Among them were several hundreds of international journalists, mostly from Latin America (Guerra, 2012:47). In his speech, Fidel Castro asked the audience to imagine ‘an immense jury’ consisting of a million men and women from all social classes, religious beliefs, and political ideas (Castro Ruz, 1959). He then asked the audience, who represented ‘the people’, whether they agreed unanimously with the way in which Batista’s prisoners were treated. After much applause, Fidel concluded that ‘the people of Cuba’ had voted and, therefore, all decisions regarding the prisoners had been democratically endorsed. Following this argument, those who accused Cuba of violating human rights were seen to be going against the will of ‘the people’ and therefore, as anti-democratic (Castro Ruz, 1959).

While the revolutionary leadership used public gatherings and the mass media as spectacles of popular support, Cuban intellectuals in the diaspora have different views regarding the early confluence between popular and revolutionary interests. For instance, as early as 1960 Cuban journalist Novás Calvo (2014: 19) criticised the lack of real participation of ‘the Cuban people’ in decision making. In a context in which the revolutionary leadership controlled all spaces of power, he argued, it was impossible to determine people’s allegiance. While ‘the people’ were mobilised in public squares, Novás Calvo considers that most Cubans were pressured and obliged to participate in this collective action. Therefore, he argues, early popular mobilisation cannot be considered a clear display of support. From 1959 to 1961, the revolutionary discourse evolved from a defence of democracy to a defence of socialism. Rojas (2010: 296) considers that the prevailing discourse in 1959 was that of ‘*democratic nationalism*’, while by 1961 the narrative of ‘*nationalising socialism*’ was self-imposed. While the early discourse focused on restoring democracy and constitutional rights, Fidel Castro’s discourse soon favoured his own idea of ‘humanism’, defined as a native Cuban ideology that was neither capitalist, nor communist.

The new ‘Fundamental Law of the Republic’ (*Ley Fundamental de la República*), which was passed on 7 February 1959, was based on the 1940 Constitution and preserved freedom of speech in article 33. Despite legal prerogatives, the pre-revolutionary media structure started to crumble. Privately-owned media outlets that were close to Batista’s dictatorship, such as *Tiempos en Cuba*, *Mañana*, *Ataja* or *Alerta*, were dismantled. Other newspapers, such as *El País*, *Diario de la Marina*, *Avance* or *Prensa Libre*, continued to be published. However, the radicalisation of the revolutionary government and the wave of nationalisations in the 1960 sparked increasing editorial opposition to reforms. In the press, some workers started publishing so-called ‘*coletillas*’, notes at the end of news stories in which workers expressed their support for ‘the Revolution’, and their disagreement with the editorial line adopted by in the newspapers.¹⁶

The nationalisation of television stations took place between April 1959 and September 1960, and commercial sponsorship disappeared in 1961 (Rivero, 2015: 131; 165). However, it remains unclear whether the revolutionary government intended to nationalise the Cuban media system. For instance, Rivero’s (2015) analysis of early revolutionary publications indicates that, while there was a will to restructure the media environment and to remove media outlets close to Fulgencio Batista, there was no will to create a completely state-owned media system. According to this view, the nationalisation of the media industry that took place in 1965 would have been the result of a combination of factors, such as anti-Batista zeal, the massive exodus of media editors

¹⁶ While it is not clear how the ‘*coletillas*’ originated, most Cuban work on the early media system describes them as ‘spontaneous’ and worker-led (Muñoz Kiel and Nápoles Rodríguez, 2006).

and journalists, and the pressure of unionised media workers through ‘*coletillas*’ (Muñoz Kiel and Nápoles Rodríguez, 2006; Rivero, 2015). By September 1961, all radio and television stations, as well as the printed press, were in the hands of the revolutionary government (Muñoz Kiel and Nápoles Rodríguez, 2006).¹⁷

1.2.2 - Towards a Conceptualisation of Cuban Media

Contrary to common assumptions, the Communist Party of Cuba has acknowledged deficiencies in the revolutionary media model since the late 1970s, when it officially recognised the need for greater criticism and independence in the media. It was in the second half of the 1980s, during the so-called period of ‘Rectification of Mistakes’, that ‘the Party’ granted greater autonomy to journalists and editors (PCC, 1976). The recognition of flaws, however, was not motivated by the will to introduce liberal-style reforms. Instead, it came from an attempt to co-opt journalists’ demands, but also from the realisation that the media could be used as barometer for identifying internal problems that could potentially distort the hegemony of ‘the Revolution’. The endurance of ‘the Revolution’ has been possible, precisely, thanks to periodic debate and negotiation between different threads of opinion. This has allowed the leadership to ‘rectify’ mistakes, to co-opt popular demands, and to renew its legitimacy (Chanan, 2001; Kapcia, 2014). In this sense, the news media have always been considered essential tools that have aided ‘the Revolution’ in the face of crisis, and have modified its discourse according to a changing context.

The Cuban media are subordinates to the Ideological Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba. Therefore, they are structurally dependent on the political system, and unable to change on their own (García Luis, 2013). After the revolutionary victory in 1959, the main sources of public communication were narrowed down to Fidel Castro, and the private media faced professional, ideological and material pressures until the 1965 nationalisation of all media outlets. The Cuban media became institutionally linked to the Communist Party of Cuba and to revolutionary organisations, and was articulated as a key instrument of education, mobilisation and propaganda. The early goal of the revolutionary media was to contribute to the transformation of ‘the people’ into Che Guevara’s idea of ‘the new revolutionary man’ (Guevara and Castro, 1989). The Cuban media were put at the service of ‘the Revolution’, something that came at the cost of ‘external regulation’ (*regulación externa*) –the term used by Cuban scholar

¹⁷ Muñoz Kiel and Nápoles Rodríguez (2006: 215) explain that the reorganisation of the media landscape left 8 national magazines, four newspapers, 156 radio stations that reached all regions of Cuba, and 2 national television channels in place. The Cuban Institute of Cinema (ICAIC) was already created as early as 1959.

Julio García Luis (2004) in his influential doctoral thesis, and which has become the politically correct way of referring to political control and censorship.

According to García Luis (2013: 23), *‘the definition of the press model in the 60s presupposed a united society, a united and strong Party and a press that would not give any space to the US and counter-revolutionaries’*. Therefore, the unwritten rule to deal with foreign aggression was the premise of not publishing anything that could be used against Cuba. However, the controversy appeared when deciding what ‘Cuba’ stood for, and what could endanger national security. According to Julio García Luis, the defence against an external threat has often been hyperbolised and magnified in political discourse and in the media, which have manipulated discourse in order to hide the miseries and the problems of the country (García Luis, 2004: 86).

The mass media can be seen as part of the cultural production of a country, and some journalists see themselves as intellectuals. However, the revolutionary government conceptualised cultural and journalistic production quite differently, and regulated them accordingly. As García Luis (2005: 108) puts it, journalism and social communication were seen to be essentially political, influencing popular perceptions, the collective mood, and national morals. According to the Cuban scholar, cultural production was seen as having both ideological and aesthetic functions, and enjoyed higher levels of autonomy and tolerance. However, Yanet Toirac (2012) is less optimistic about the political conceptualisation of culture and highlights the role of the Communist Party of Cuba in the elaboration of cultural policies and in the supervision of cultural production. Therefore, she considers that cultural production, including media production, were conceived as tools for the ideological reproduction of revolutionary ideas, and as spaces for hegemonic renewal. Nevertheless, there were significant differences in the way in which intellectuals and journalists defended their professional identity. Artists, writers, movie directors and other members of the intellectual elite were able to defend their creative independence from early on.

While Cuban artists, writers and filmmakers pushed for recognition of their intellectual independence early on in ‘the Revolution’, leading the so-called ‘Cultural Polemics’, journalists never enjoyed the same degree of autonomy (Leyva and Somohano, 2008; Kumaraswami, 2009; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2014). In this respect, Cuban journalists not only lacked the clout and leverage that artists had, both inside the Island and internationally, but were not recognised as an independent professional and intellectual body in the realm of the revolutionary debate (García Luis, 2013). Consequently, the weak professional identity and autonomy of Cuban journalists has damaged their agency, which lags behind all other areas of cultural and intellectual production.

One of the earliest examples of ‘Cultural Polemics’ (*‘Polémicas Culturales’*) was sparked when the Cuban Institute of Cinema (ICAIC) refused to show a modest documentary, *PM*, in cinemas. The documentary had been partly financed by *Lunes de Revolución*, the cultural supplement of *Revolución* (organ of the ‘26 July Movement’ founded by the guerrilla leaders in Sierra Maestra). The *PM* polemic had strong repercussions in establishing the ideological freedom of artists and intellectuals. This ‘Cultural Polemic’, while spelling the closure of the cultural supplement, also inspired one of Fidel Castro’s most famous speeches: ‘Words to the Intellectuals’ (Fornet, 2007: 7).

Fidel Castro’s iconic 1961 ‘Words to the Intellectuals’, *‘Inside the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing’*, indirectly established the official limits of intellectual freedom, as well as revolutionary belonging (Kapcia, 2014: 190). Fidel’s words have ever since represented a valuable guide for both granting and curtailing freedom of speech on the Island. Some argue that Fidel Castro’s words granted broad freedoms by welcoming non-revolutionary, non-anti-revolutionary cultural and intellectual production within the revolutionary consensus (Kapcia, 2014; Muñoz Kiel and Nápoles Rodríguez, 2006; Leyva and Somohano, 2008). However, others consider that the vagueness of Fidel’s words has allowed for the legitimisation of censorship. For instance, Cuban historian Julio César Guanche (2008: 15) considers that Fidel Castro valued more the contribution of Cuban intellectuals and artists to the survival of ‘the Revolution’ than their creativity (Guanche, 2008: 15). Similarly, Muñoz Kiel and Nápoles Rodríguez (2006: 226) acknowledge that freedom of speech was bound to revolutionary responsibility. In this sense, artists and intellectuals were responsible for fostering social consensus through the production of convergent discourses. According to this view, dissent could jeopardise revolutionary policies in a context of internal and external turmoil.

After its creation in 1965, the Communist Party of Cuba assumed full responsibility for ‘*all matters of ideology*’, appointing editors and taking control over media content and organisational structures (Castro Ruz, 1965).¹⁸ In moments of crises, this control was so stringent that Fidel Castro would physically take over the editor in chief’s office at *Granma*, the official organ of the Communist Party of Cuba and the country’s main newspaper (Marrero, 2006). Although every media outlet in Cuba has its own editorial guidelines, they are all coordinated by the ‘Ideological Department of the Central Committee’ of the Communist Party of Cuba, which establishes

¹⁸ For a more detailed assessment of the Cuban revolutionary media system, see García Luis (2004), Pérez González (2008), and Oller Alonso and Olivera Pérez (2016).

periodical editorial lines, as well as specific guidelines for the coverage of relevant topics (González García, 2014). Juan Orlando Pérez González (2008: 121) considers that the Cuban media system is managed from the very top of the country's leadership, which decides what type of information is made available to the public, the channels of dissemination, and its adequate timing. Guanche (2008: 200) goes one step further, arguing that the state is the only political actor in Cuba, which leaves little room for the consolidation of independent media projects. In the literature, the external control of the media is attributed to three main motives: the fear of losing its communicational hegemony, the need for protecting 'the Revolution' from foreign propaganda, and newsrooms' adoption of Soviet-like bureaucratic structures. In fact, some leading researchers argue that the media remains the most 'Soviet' institution in Cuba (Guanche, 2008; García Luis, 2013).

1.2.3 - Ideological Fluctuation and the Cuban Media

The previous section has examined the role of 'Cultural Polemics' as an indicator of the limits of ideological freedom in Cuba. A relevant 'polemic' that took place in the late 1960s opened a period of increased repression known as the 'Grey Quinquennium' ('*El Quinquenio Gris*').¹⁹ The 'Union of Cuban Artists and Writers' ('Unión de Escritores y Artistas Cubanos', UNEAC) gave Cuban poet Heriberto Padilla a prize for his book *Fuera de Juego* 1968. Interestingly, the book was published with a note from the UNEAC recognising that, while it served the interests of 'the enemy', the organisation hoped that the book sparked debate about the limits of artists' ideological commitment to 'the Revolution' (Fornet, 2007: 8). Two years later, the author revealed that he had been in prison, and that he was obliged to read a public apology for the nature of his poems. Padilla's revelations sparked an international wave of rejection from European and Latin American intellectuals, who signed a letter in French newspaper *Le Monde* denouncing the repression of intellectuals on the Island. Fornet (2007) considers that the repercussions of the Padilla case motivated the last-minute inclusion of cultural debates in the 1971 'Congress of Education'. In the Declaration of the Congress, artistic production was defined on moral and populist grounds:

*Art is a weapon of the Revolution; a product of the combative moral of our people,
an instrument against the penetration of the enemy. The socialist Revolution is the*

¹⁹ The name '*Quinquenio Gris*' has become the standard way of describing the 'Five Grey Years' of intellectual repression that developed from 1971 to 1976, and was coined by Cuban intellectual Ambrosio Fornet in 1987. The period was characterised by growing influence of Soviet-style 'socialist realism' in Cuban artistic and cultural policies, promoting ethical values over aesthetic ones, pedagogy over introspection, and positive views over conflicting ones.

highest achievement of Cuban culture and it's based on the following unavoidable truth: We are ready to continue the battle for developing both at their greatest potential. (PCC, 1971)

The '*Quinquenio Gris*' is often identified as the period between this congress, and the 1976 foundation of the Ministry of Culture, which would finally relax political control over cultural production. However, some scholars consider that the effects of the '*Quinquenio Gris*' did not fade at the end of 5 years. For instance, Cuban architect and intellectual Mario Coyula (2007) calls it '*El Trinquenio Amargo*', or the '*Bitter Triple Quinquennium*' (lasting until the 'Rectification' debates that took place in the mid-1980s), although he acknowledges that some of the consequences are still felt today.

The 'Grey Quinquennium' produced a radical change in the balance of power that prevailed during the first decade of 'the Revolution', substituting debate and negotiation by policies that marginalised a part of the cultural elite by decree (Fornet, 2007). The shift towards bureaucracy, dogmatism, and 'social realism' took place against the will of leading Cuban intellectuals and artists, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

Us –young Cubans who saw ourselves as the inheritors and representatives of the literary and artistic avant-garde– could not share this view..., which was a serious problem, since the idea that ethical discrepancies hid political discrepancies had been gaining influence among the dogmatic circles. (Fornet, 2007: 5)

Cuban intellectual Ambrosio Fornet (2007) considers that the routinisation of support became widespread in cultural and artistic production during the 'Quinquennium'. In this context, cultural production became a dispassionate goal to be met, damaging creative enthusiasm (2007: 15). Therefore, there seems to be a consensus on the everlasting tolerance of bureaucracy, dogmatism, and mediocrity in cultural production (García Luis, 2004; Fornet, 2007). As the dynamism and the critical spirit that some journalists experienced in the early revolutionary media slowly declined, it was replaced by a triumphalist, dogmatic and uncritical portrayal of Cuban society (Espina, 2008; Leyva and Somohano, 2008). This could be at the roots of the deprofessionalisation and devaluation of Cuban cultural expressions (Quiroga, 2005).

In the 1980s, cultural policies relaxed (Quiroga, 2005) and the government invited intellectuals to participate in national debates during the so-called period of 'Rectification of Mistakes and Negative Tendencies' ('*Rectificación de Errores y Tendencias Negativas*'). The Cuban government started the process of 'Rectification' as a reaction against the tailwinds of Mikhail

Gorbachev's perestroika, asserting Cuba's power to decide its own revolutionary path. The process of 'Rectification' included different economic and socio-cultural measures. On an economic level, it promoted state centralisation and the prevalence of moral incentives over economic ones amongst workers (Quiroga, 2005).

In this thesis, I argue that the social, political, and ideological debates that took place during the 'Rectification' period have influenced the popular spirit of openness that characterised the call to the IV Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba (1990-1991). For instance, González García (2012) considers that the popular debates that preceded the IV Congress reached an unprecedented level of open-mindedness.²⁰

The collapse of the Soviet Union had a great ideological and economic impact in Cuba, leaving the country in a 'Special Period' of survival. The crisis challenged a key assumption of the revolutionary discourse: the view of 'the Revolution' as the sole guarantor of social justice, and people's wellbeing. González García (2012) contends that the 'Rectification' of the Cuban media was restrained in the 1990s, motivated by the multiple crises that the end of the Cold War brought about. Throughout the 1990s, artistic and cultural production, rather than journalism, led the way in addressing social problems, such as inequality or emigration.²¹ For instance, critical and pluralistic accounts of reality were mostly disseminated in cultural magazines, which enjoyed greater independence than the mass media (Leyva and Somohano, 2008: 49). Some scholars, such as historian Pedro Pablo Rodríguez and sociologist Mayra Espina, argue that Cuban academia also achieved significant leverage and independence towards the end of the century (in Hernández, 2008b: 275). Nevertheless, cultural and academic debates do not have the reach and the repercussion of the mass media and were never able to generate widespread social debate.

1.2.4 - Cuban Media in the 21st Century

Previous research considers autonomy to be a key element to the professionalisation of journalism, as well as one of the main determinants of journalists' ability to perform in coherence with their ideals or normative referents (Örnebring, 2012; Waisbord, 2013a; Mellado and Van Dalen, 2014). Whereas the most powerful influences on journalistic autonomy on a global scale

²⁰ Furthermore, some scholars consider that the 'Rectification' spirit also inspired the period of 'Updating' and self-criticism encouraged by Raúl Castro's leadership (August, 2013: 120).

²¹ Some scholars highlight that the leverage of artists and intellectuals would have started with the appointment of Abel Prieto as president of the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists in 1997 ('*Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba*', or UNEAC) (Garcés and Hernández, 2012).

seem to be procedural –related to journalists’ resources and habits– , and organisational –related to editorial and managerial decisions–, political and economic influences are essential in non-western countries, which enjoy lower levels of press freedom and higher political parallelism.²² In the case of Cuba, the media is contingent on the political system and, therefore, allows little autonomy over journalists’ professional practice. Furthermore, freedom of speech is limited to those who operate ‘inside’ ‘the Revolution’ (as Fidel Castro stated in his ‘Words to the Intellectuals’) and ‘within socialism’, as stated in article 53 of the 1992 Constitution (PCC, 1992). The problem, according to Cuban academic García Luis, is that professional autonomy and self-regulation are essential for the existence of journalism itself and, in their absence, journalism risks to be reduced to mere propaganda (García Luis, 2013: 88). In this context, the Cuban media dependence on the political system has been detrimental to the professionalisation of journalism (Elizalde, 2013; García Luis, 2013).

The result is a contradiction between journalists’ ideals and their ability to advance their demands in practice. This is not just specific to Cuba, as a body of cross-national research has found. For instance, Claudia Mellado has extensively worked on the contradiction between journalists’ normative ideals and their everyday practices from a comparative perspective (Hanitzsch and Mellado, 2011; Reich and Hanitzsch, 2013; Mellado and Van Dalen, 2014). In order to explain this contradiction, Mellado draws on Thomas Hanitzsch’s concept of a bidimensional journalistic culture, consisting of both evaluative and performative elements (Hanitzsch, 2007; Mellado, 2014). Whereas the evaluative elements are based on ideal roles or normative criteria, the journalistic product is the outcome of a process of negotiation between political, economic, organisational, procedural and professional influences (Mellado, 2014). For this reason, the Cuban media’s ideological, organisational and economic dependence on the political system has been detrimental for journalists’ agency, producing a gap between normative ideals and their daily practice (Oller Alonso and Olivera Pérez, 2016).

Previous research conducted at the Faculty of Communication, *University of Havana*, highlights the weaknesses of the Cuban media model and the restricted impact that discourses of change have had in practice. Having reviewed a number of undergraduate and postgraduate theses, I have found overall consensus about the need to update the Cuban media model. The Faculty has coordinated a pool of theses that analyse the media coverage of the process of ‘Updating’ of

²² For an extended explanation of external constraints, see Reich and Hanitzsch (2013), and Hanitzsch and Mellado (2011). For an extended explanation of societal expectations, see Örnebring (2012).

Cuban socialism. According to these works, the Communist Party of Cuba continues to hold a strong grip on both the news agenda, and media content (Cabrera Morejón, 2014; González García, 2014; Guía Delis, 2014; Medina Orama, 2014; Pis Girola, 2014). Furthermore, Party control also limits journalists' access to public information, to news sources, and to current affairs –which may need to be rubber-stamped by 'the Party' prior to publication– (García Luis, 2004; Castro Morales, 2009; Elizalde, 2014).²³

Cuban political scientist Julio César Guanche considers that the main problem of the Cuban media is conceptual and structural, rather than professional or technological. For the Cuban researcher, *'it is not a question of getting people to talk, but of getting the ideopolitical models that guide these people's behaviour to talk'* (Guanche, 2008: 207). Cuban journalist and academic Rosa Miriam Elizalde reaches similar conclusions in her doctoral thesis. Elizalde (2013) has analysed media workers' opinions regarding the problems of Cuban journalism. In her work, the scholar contextualises current debates in the midst of a double crisis. According to the scholar, Cuba is experiencing a socio-economic crisis produced by the current 'Updating' of the model, as well as a technical crisis produced by the incorporation of the Island into the informational society. Therefore, the Communist Party of Cuba would need to rethink the media model in the light of changing circumstances. The scholar considers that the permanence of the existing model damages the legitimacy of the institutional media, as well as their ability to mobilise citizens. Some leading scholars conclude that any successful changes in the media system will have to be motivated by a change of mentality in all spheres, recognising freedom of speech and freedom of the press as citizen rights (Elizalde, 2013; Recio Silva, 2014).

Final Remarks

In revolutionary Cuba, 'the people' have been constructed in opposition to a double threat: the external enemy and the internal resistance of citizens to complying with their revolutionary duties. This chapter has examined the clusters that have sustained the hegemony of the Cuban Revolution over time. First, I have offered a historical analysis of the main clusters of populism, from the pioneer US Popular Party, to 21st century populist discourses. I have argued that four pervasive clusters of populist discourse have prevailed over time, in different settings: 'the people', 'the enemy', 'the nation', and 'the leader'. I have discussed each of the clusters, which have then been examined in the context of revolutionary Cuba. These four clusters of populist

²³ Access to public information is currently one of the main demands of journalists and editors. For instance, the 'Union of Cuban Journalists' (*Unión de Periodistas Cubanos*) launched an anti-secrecy campaign after its 2013 congress.

discourse –which I have called nodal points, borrowing Laclau’s term– have been used as deductive analytical categories in the analysis of the data. In the next chapter, I will explain the relevance of looking at populism from a discursive point of view.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study looks at the way in which ‘the people’ have been constructed in Cuban newspaper *Granma* (chapters four and five), as well as the way in which Cuban journalists challenge the hegemonic discourse of the press (chapter six). In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework of this thesis, that is, the conceptualisation of populism as discourse. The first section examines different ways of understanding populism, and introduces the notion of populism as discourse. The second section goes one step further, looking at a particular way of approaching the relationship between discourse and populism. In this thesis, I use an analytical framework grounded on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s Discourse Theory. Therefore, this chapter explains the analytical concepts that have guided my analysis of ‘the Cuban people’.

Taking a discourse theoretical approach allows researchers to examine populism as a discourse that can be found across temporal and geographic frames. The methodological flexibility of this approach (Carpentier and De Cleen, 2007) means that discourse can be analysed from both an inductive and a deductive perspective. Discourse theoretical analysis focuses on the articulation of structures of meaning that sustain unequal power relations. However, other discursive approaches allow researchers to examine the linguistic strategies that enable the populist construction of collective identities (Reisigl and Wodak, 2015).

The chapter goes on to explore the relationship between media and populism, emphasising the way in which Latin American leaders have used the media as a tool for advancing their own goals. Finally, I argue that the Latin American case is essential for understanding the dissonance between populist leaders’ appeals to the people, and effective popular participation in decision-making. This is of great importance, I argue, for the Cuban case.

2.1 - What is Populism?

The term populism, while based on the ancient idea of popular sovereignty, was conceptualised in the late 19th century in the context of popular agrarian mobilisations in the United States (the Popular Party) and Russia (the *narodnik* movement). In this sense, Kazin (1995: 5) calls the late 19th century agrarian movements Populism with a capital ‘P’, since they laid the foundations for what scholars nowadays call ‘populist discourse’. However, he recognises that populist discourse

did not suddenly appear nor finish there, since it was inherited from previous grassroots movements and evolved throughout the 20th century.

Since the late 19th century, populism has been applied to the most diverse movements, in different continents and at different times. This variety of significances (Demmers et al., 2001: 2) and the difference between ‘*commonsensical*’ and ‘*theoretical*’ uses of the term (Howarth, 2015: 13) have troubled the understanding of the phenomenon. When reading scholarly work on populism, it is common to find long discussions regarding the ‘*slippery*’ conceptualisation of the term (Weyland, 2010: viii) to a point that certain scholars dismiss any ‘*comprehensive definition*’ at all (Germani, 1978: 86). Therefore, there has been a tendency to define populism in negative terms – demagoguery, inefficiency, irresponsibility– or for what it lacks –clarity, coherence– (Weyland, 2001). In order to overcome negative prejudices, some scholars conceive populism as having an ‘*anexact*’ nature (Arditi, 2007: 49).

Populism has become a delegitimising tool in popular language. In Taguieff’s (2007: 96) words, ‘*bestialised, pathologised and demonised*’ by media and political elites, populism has become an adjective reserved for ones’ political enemies. Populism has received such a bad press that even leaders commonly described as ‘populist’ dismiss such adjective (Hawkins, 2010: 51). Although populist rhetorical appeals to ‘the people’ could be understood as demagogic or as ‘*demophile*’, they are usually assimilated to the former, says Taguieff (in Mazzoleni, 2004: 1). Populism has often been seen to foster ‘*a manipulative relationship*’ (Dix, 1985: 45) in which a charismatic leader distorts information and appeals to the visceral emotions of ‘the people’ through demagoguery and political opportunism (Arditi, 2007: 59; Taguieff, 2007: 93). Therefore, Laclau (2005a: 16) considers that most of the ‘*academic blockade*’ around populism comes from the influence of a 19th century mass psychology that saw the masses as lacking rationality and being easily seduced by demagogic leaders. Whereas both demagoguery and opportunism can be present in populism, I argue that they are not the core elements of populism, but probable consequences of a populist worldview, expressed through a specific type of political discourse.

Despite the confusion and negativity surrounding the conceptualisation of populism, many scholars consider populism an indispensable phenomenon to understand the democratic history and political culture of many regions (Conniff, 1999a; Weyland, 2001; Laclau, 2005a; Patiño Aristozábal, 2007). Laclau’s contribution to the study of Latin American populism in the 1970s consisted precisely of a switch from negative structuralist and historicist conceptualisations towards a non-ideological perspective.

In Latin America, the 1930s saw the emergence of a regional wave of populist leadership, known as classic populism, which lasted until the decade of the 1950s. After the independence wars, national ruling oligarchies had stabilised the region by establishing liberalism as the common regime (Laclau, 2005a: 192). However, the 1929 Great Depression diminished the redistributive potential of those oligarchic liberal states, as well as their ability to channel popular demands. This context of crises set the stage for the regional spread of populist movements.

Latin America has seen diverse political and cultural traditions. However, it is possible to observe certain populist waves in the region throughout the 20th century: classic populist movements in the 1940s and 1950s, Marxist revolutionary movements in the 1960s and 1970s, followed by a certain exhaustion of populism; a neo-populist metamorphosis in the 1980s and new socialist movements in the 1990s and 2000s, whether in democratic (Chile), indigenist (Mexico, Bolivia), popular (Brazil) or populist (Venezuela, Ecuador).

The apparent exhaustion of populism in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s have led certain scholars to claim a vanishing of populism, once the main phase of adaption to modern societies was completed. For instance, Drake (1999) called for a '*requiem for populism*'. However, Silvio Waisbord (2013a: 4) contends that, far from disappearing, populism has remained '*an essential phenomenon*' in Latin American politics.

Conceptualisations of populism have fluctuated throughout the 20th century between what Weyland (2001) calls cumulative, radial and classical perspectives. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, modernisation and dependency approaches to populism prioritised cumulative definitions, collecting a set of political and socio-economic characteristics shared by different populist movements. However, the accumulation of populist features only contributed to increasing theoretical confusion, expanding the elasticity and vagueness of the concept (Waisbord, 2003: 198). In an attempt to narrow the concept down, some scholars attempted to offer a radial definition that would gather the essential traits of populism, used to grade different leaders or movements.

From a radial perspective, Taguieff (2007: 128-132) has identified eight characteristics in Latin American classic populism: (1) the mobilisation of available popular classes, mainly urban, (2) which become attached to a charismatic and demagogic leader through (3) unmediated emotional links. Populist leaders would base their discourse on (4) notions of national sovereignty, identity and independence, mixed with (5) ambiguous ideological claims, and (6) they would integrate popular demands within the system, rather than seeking a real revolution. Finally, (7) the state

would lead industrial modernisation and economic development, thereby appealing to (8) an inter-class majority that would collaborate in the achievement of these goals.

2.1.1 - Populism and Democracy

One of the main debates in the study of populism is the extent to which populism has become a pervasive phenomenon in politics. In response to this dilemma, there seems to be growing scholarly consent that populism is an inextricable part of politics (Canovan, 1999; Laclau, 2005a; Ardit, 2007). Much of this debate has been influenced by the work of Ernesto Laclau (Laclau, 2005a: 154), who considers the construction of 'the people' the political act *par excellence*. Therefore, from a Laclaunian perspective all political interventions would entail some degree of populism.

Scholarly debates on politics and populism tend to focus on the degree to which the latter is compatible with democracy. For instance, Worsley (1969) sees populism as an emphatic dimension of political culture, compatible with democracy. Similarly, Margaret Canovan (1999) considers populism a '*shadow of democracy*' and, consequently, embedded in all democratic practices. Drawing on Oakeshott's definition of the 'politics of faith' and the 'politics of scepticism', Canovan's idea of populism arises from the asymmetry between two faces of democratic politics. At one extreme, democratic politics can be understood as the romantic and spontaneous expression of the people's will, known as 'the politics of redemption'. At the other extreme, democratic politics can be seen from more pragmatic lenses, in need of specialised institutions and professionals to mediate the popular will. According to this model, populism arises when democratic politics suffer an imbalance due to an excess of pragmatism, or a deficit of redemption (in other words, an excess of elitism or a deficit of populism). In such situations, populist leaders can gain popular support by promising to replace the excess of pragmatic institutional politics by a personal connexion to citizens' demands.

The presence of populism in democratic politics can vary from soft discourses that criticise politics as usual to more radical cases. The concept of a threatening populism is reflected in Canovan's idea of populism as a shadow, reinforced by Ardit's (2007: 50-51) vision of populism as '*spectre of democracy*', being able to accompany and haunt democratic practices. In summary, populism can be seen from Laclau's perspective as an '*empty signifier*', having the possibility of being filled with democratic or undemocratic purposes (Laclau, 2005a; Taguieff, 2007).

From Arditì's (2007) perspective, populism can adopt three variants in modern politics: mild, intermediate and extreme. What matters is to understand the conditions that make populism arise in a specific political context, and in a particular variant. In its mild variant, populism becomes part of mainstream politics and represents the people's voice whenever elites are unwilling or unable to respond to their concerns (Arditi, 2007: 60, 62). In this situation, populism can be understood simply as healthy criticism, as a collective '*political screaming*' that speaks aloud the deficiencies and ambiguities of modern democracies (Bouvet, 2012: 20). This is what Canovan (2005) refers to as '*politicians' populism*'. In its intermediate variant, populism starts challenging the status quo and becomes '*like a guest who has had a drink too many and, therefore, behaves in an awkward manner*' (Arditi, 2007: 78). Intermediate types of populism give visibility to the excess of pragmatism in politics, such as the institutionalisation, the mediation and the impersonalisation of the popular will. Therefore, intermediate types of populism can arise when a populist leader is able to channel popular dissatisfaction with politics through redemptive promises, tipping the scale in favour of 'the people' (Arditi, 2007: 78-80). It is only in its extreme variants that populism can endanger democratic politics. When populist leaders see themselves as the sole representatives of popular will, rejecting further mediating channels, they risk ceasing requiring popular authorisation and, in the long run, become undemocratic.

Some scholars consider populism arising from the institutional and social weaknesses of liberal democracy, that is, from its lack of popular representativeness (Canovan, 1999; Waisbord, 2013b). As Canovan (2005: 5) summarises: '*Populists may have a bad name (at any rate in Europe) but their trump card, the belief in popular sovereignty, lies at the heart of democracy itself*'. Therefore, most scholars argue that populism carries both democratic and authoritarian components, adopting certain totalitarian features but remaining mostly democratic (Germani, 1978; Dix, 1985; Di Tella, 1997; Laclau, 2005a; Taguieff, 2007).

A long-standing assumption in the academic literature on populism is its alleged compatibility with any concrete ideology. However, I argue that populism is an intrinsic element of politics and, therefore, it can manifest itself in combination with different ideologies, independently of their place in the right-left/ democratic-authoritarian spectrum (Laclau, 1977; Germani, 1978; Di Tella, 1997; Mudde, 2004). Consequently, I argue that the systematic exclusion of socialist regimes (such as Castroism in Cuba) cannot be justified *a priori* by the nature of populism itself.

Whereas there is some scholarly agreement on the conceptualisation of populism as flexible and compatible with different ideologies, there is a lack of academic consensus about the revolutionary nature of populist discourse. The main argument is that classic populism is a

political strategy to promote consensus between the lower and middle strata of society and a frustrated elite, who join forces against traditional elites. However, this appeal to a unified people can only imply a top-down substitution of one elite for another.

Some scholars have come to see populism as only pseudo-revolutionary. For instance, Drake sees populist leaders as '*charlatans who duped the workers into settling for reform instead of Revolution*' (in Demmers et al., 2001: 4). Although populist politicians often provide their policies with a sense of mission, and aim to radically transform the status quo beyond the established institutional framework, they do not seem to advocate for a radical rupture with the past, nor for a people-led Revolution (Weyland, 2001: 13). This apparent contradiction of populism is at the heart of academic debates about the compatibility between populism and socialism.

On the one hand, traditional populist leaders have often refused to clearly embrace socialism, considering it a foreign ideology. On the other hand, socialist leaders have also criticised populism for giving preference to class-cohesion rather than to class struggle. This rationale has contributed to the exclusion of socialist governments in the study of populism, either in Tito's Yugoslavia, Mao's China, Castro's Cuba or Allende's Chile.

The compatibility between populism and communism/ socialism has been defended by a group of scholars led by the Argentinian Laclau (1977; 2005a). According to their theory, populism should be studied as a discursive appeal to 'the people' against a hegemonic order. Therefore, the degree of populism in politics will depend on the degree of antagonism between the forces in power and the people; that is, the degree to which the government decides to integrate popular demands and, therefore, lessen the antagonism between elite and popular interests. Laclau (1977) argues that the maximum degree of populism would arise when the mobilised people aspire to fully eliminate all contradictions between the state and the popular will. For Laclau, this would have its main representative in socialism:

[T]he only social sector which can aspire to the full development of 'the people' power bloc contradiction, that is to say, to the highest and most radical form of populism, is that whose class interests lead it to the suppression of the state as an antagonistic force. In socialism, therefore, coincide the highest form of 'populism' and the resolution of the ultimate and most radical of class conflicts. The dialectic between 'the people' and classes finds here the final moment of its unity, there is no socialism without populism, and the highest forms of populism can only be socialist.
(Laclau, 1977: 196-197)

Ernesto Laclau, a post-Marxist himself, considers that a class-centred vision of social conflict should be changed by a discursive view that sees social conflict determined by competing visions of the political, in a constant fight to become hegemonic. According to this model, any social class can start a mobilisation against the political system, whether the popular classes, the middle classes, an incongruous elite, the intellectuals, or the army. To summarise, while Laclau's post-Marxist approach to populism does not share the centrality of class struggle, the Argentinian scholar maintains the materialist ideas of social antagonism and the power of collective mobilisation.

The compatibility between populism and socialism has been defended by other scholars as well. An early expert of populism, Germani (1978: 103) considered the Cuban Revolution as the first regional example of socialist authoritarianism, which combined socialism with some features of populism. Similarly, Di Tella (1997: 55) classified the Cuban Revolution as an example of populism, led by lower middle-class non-legitimate leaders –that is, political outsiders. Furthermore, Michael Löwy (1987: 5) contends that the career of Fidel Castro, and therefore, the Cuban Revolution, originated in the populist Orthodox Youth and had a significant impact in other regional populist movements, some of which moved towards Marxist positions. In Cardoso and Faletto's (1979: 200) words, '*in one form or another, during the past decade, the politics of Latin American popular forces were profoundly marked by the presence of the Cuban Revolution*'. More recently, Taguieff (2007: 205) considered socialism and populism to have common linkages and argued that populist movements in the Global South usually take some socialist direction, promising social services to citizens in exchange for votes. In the Latin American context, Drake (1999) argued that populism has been more frequent in countries with weak democratic institutions and frequent military interventions.

The debates about the relationship of populism and socialism have been reopened by one of the main exponents of contemporary populism, Hugo Chávez, who publicly embraced the so-called 21st century socialism in 2005. Some scholars, such as Sujatha Fernandes (2006) or Karen Kampwirth (2010), have labelled this wave of populist movements as '*revolutionary populism*'. However, Kurt Weyland (2010) deems 'revolutionary' an uneasy adjective for populism and prefers the term '*radical populism*'. According to this view, this 'radical' wave would be coherent with a populist version of socialism.

2.2 - Conceptual Approaches to Populism

In the following sub-sections, I will discuss the main conceptualisations of populism throughout the 20th century; that is, the so-called structural, economic, and political waves of populism. Then, I will propose a discursive approach to populism and I will argue that the tension between ‘the people’ and an external enemy that lies at the heart of populism has been discursively constructed throughout history, and in multiple geographic settings.

2.2.1 - Structural Approaches to Populism

Structuralist theories have explained populism as a mechanism of social and political integration between centre and periphery –within the nation and between nations– which was successfully managed through the affective bonds created by a charismatic leader with ‘the people’ (Dorna, 2005: 5). On the one hand, modernisation theorists observed populism from an economicist perspective, as a specific stage of development in the transition between traditional and modern society that caused an acute crisis of adaptation (Germani, 1978; Di Tella, 1997). On the other hand, dependency theories contextualised the wave of populism in Latin America in the broader incorporation of peripheral countries into the capitalist system that was accelerated after World War II (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979; O’Donnell et al., 1986).

Although most current ideas of populism originated in agrarian-based movements in the second half of the 19th century, such as the *narodniks* movement in pre-revolutionary Russia or the Popular Party in the United States (Dix, 1985: 29), most scholars agree that the first regional waves of populism in Latin America originated in the midst of the great socio-economic changes that took place between the 1930s and 1950s. Cardoso and Faletto (1979) used a dependency approach to contextualise the wave of Latin American populism in the period following the Great Depression and World War II, which obliged many countries –most notably Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Colombia and Brazil– to tackle their reliance on imports and develop a self-sufficient state-led industrial sector as the only guarantee for self-sustained growth. This period of protectionist development has been known as ‘Import Substitution Industrialisation’ (ISI).

According to Di Tella (1997: 49) the ISI period brought improvements in the levels of industrialisation, urbanisation and education to the most developed countries in Latin America, favouring a mass exodus of labour from rural areas to big cities. Once installed in urban areas, the migrated people abandoned their ‘three fathers’ in the countryside: the extended family leader, the priest and the small-scale employer (or *patrón*). Freed from the traditional linkages of

education and obedience, the mass media generated in the crowds what Germani (1978) called a '*revolution of growing expectations*'. However, in a society still in transition from traditional to modern political structures, the working-class organisations that resulted were too weak to channel those exceedingly political expectations from the masses. In consequence, the political availability of the masses facilitated their attachment to a charismatic *caudillo*, 'the father of the poor', the populist leader. Summarising, the main traits of classic populism from a structuralist perspective were: (1) a leadership by minorities within the middle or upper strata experiencing status inconsistency; (2) high social mobilisation by unorganised masses that had broken their traditional bonds of loyalty; and (3) a connection between both groups through a convergence of interests against the status-quo, exalted through a charismatic and emotional appeal (Di Tella, 1997: 50-51).

The main problem with structural conceptualisations of populism lies in their lack of validity for explaining the permanence of populism in Latin America, once it reached more advanced stages of development, or the proliferation of populist discourses in western democracies. Therefore, contemporary scholars have rejected structuralist conceptions of populism that link the phenomenon to a specific stage of development. In Hawkin's (2010) view, the crises that originated during a populist wave in Latin America in the 1930s should be considered a favourable context, and not a main requirement for the arousal of populism.

2.2.2 - Economic Approaches to Populism

Populism has long been understood as the use of redistributive economic policies in exchange for popular votes. Two of the more well-known defendants of this conceptualisation are Dornbusch and Edwards (1989: 2), who defined economic populism as '*an approach to economics that emphasises growth and income distribution*', while de-emphasising the risks derived from these policies. This definition stressed the economic irresponsibility of populist economic policies, condemned to economic and social failure in the long term, '*leading invariably*' to inefficiency, rapid inflation, increasing unemployment and decreasing wages (Edwards, 2010: 165). Therefore, populist economic policies would end up harming the poor communities they were expected to empower.

In Latin America, neither classic economic redistributive practices, nor neo-populist financial liberalisation have managed to balance social stability, economic growth and inequality reduction (Demmers et al., 2001: 12). Therefore, far from stopping the populist cycle, the failure of neo-populism in tackling poverty and inequality in Latin America would have produced a new crisis

of political scepticism, facilitating the rise of a new wave of populist redeemers (Weyland, 1995: 130).

Early historicist and economicist approaches to populism went out of date with the populist revival in the decades of the 1980s and 1990s under a changed neoliberal order. Populism's adaptation to neoliberal economic practices seemed to provide evidence that former economicist conceptions of populism, such as Dornbusch and Edwards' (1989), had partly missed the point. Far from being restricted to specific historic moments and economic policies, it became possible that populism emerged at any phase of development (Laclau, 2005a), adapting its economic and social policies to different contexts (Kaufman and Stalling in Demmers et al., 2001; Weyland, 2001). For Ardit (2007), the distribution of wealth in populist regimes can become a political weapon, whether applied in the name of protectionism or neoliberalism.

The possible metamorphosis of populism and neoliberalism has been the fruit of intense academic debates. However, most scholars endorse the compatibility of populism with neoliberal practices, known as neo-populism. In fact, *'populism and neoliberalism got along rather well'* (Demmers et al., 2001: 1). In Latin America, the neo-populist wave has been represented by, for instance, the governments of Peronist Carlos Menem in Argentina and Alberto Fujimori in Peru. While such leaders are considered to share significant similarities with classic populism, from which they took their name, they are also seen as presenting important inconsistencies.

Neo-populism presents certain differences if compared to classical populism. Therefore, certain scholars consider that neo-populism constitutes a different type of populist leadership (Patiño Aristozábal, 2007; Rojas Huerta et al., 2009: 135). The most obvious change has been the state promotion of contradictory economic policies, from state-led protectionism, towards market liberalisation and austerity measures. Furthermore, Taguieff (2007: 40) considers that neo-populism has also brought a metamorphosis in political discourse, facilitating a change from classic anti-oligarchic stances to complaints against 'politics as usual'. Therefore, populism can either include those incorporating themselves to politics for the first time, or those dissatisfied with traditional politics (Weyland, 2001: 14).

2.2.3 - Ideational Conceptualisations of Populism

In order to overcome the limitations of structuralist and economicist definitions, certain scholars advocate for a purely political conceptualisation of populism (Conniff, 1999a; Weyland, 2001). For instance, Weyland (1995: 126) defines populism as a political strategy in which 'a

personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, un-institutionalised support from large numbers of mostly unorganised followers'. The common denominator of labelling populism a political '*strategy*' (Weyland, 2001), '*style*' (Knight, 1998), '*discourse*' (Laclau, 2005a), '*language*' (Kazin, 1995), '*appeal*' (Canovan, 1999) or '*thin-centred ideology*' (Mudde, 2004), is that all these concepts stress a vision of populism as a set of political ideas, rather than a clear cluster of political action (Dupuy, 2002; Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013).

Since the 1970s, a group of scholars proposed to understand populism as a specific type of political discourse, rather than a coherent ideology or governance style. For instance, Kazin (1995: 3) has analysed in *The Populist Persuasion*, the discourse of American leaders that aspired to speak for the people, using populism '*as a flexible mode of persuasion*'.

There is the instinctive idea that certain candidates just '*sound*' populist, regardless of their party affiliation, policies or ideology. One of the most quoted examples of populist discourse is the late former president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez. In December 2006, his closing campaign speech sounded as follows:

You the people are the giant that awoke, I your humble soldier will only do what you say. I am at your orders to continue clearing the way to the greater Homeland... Because you are not going to re-elect Chávez really, you are going to re-elect yourselves, the people will re-elect the people. Chávez is nothing but an instrument of the people. (Hugo Chávez, in Hawkins, 2009: 1040-1041)

In reference to these words, Hawkins (2009: 1041) wonders: '*What is about these words that makes them sound populist? Do other politicians traditionally labelled as populist sound similar?*' Intuitively, a leader would sound populist when it appeals to 'the people' in its discourses. However, appealing to 'the people' is not a sufficient condition on its own. What transforms discursive appeals to people into populism is '*the people/power contradiction*' (Laclau, 1977: 167).

A charismatic politician would become a populist leader when he or she constructs an antithesis between 'us' –'the people'– vis-à-vis 'them' –the dominant elites– through a series of symbols, images and themes, activating a popular '*reservoir of raw anti-status quo feelings*' (Laclau, 2005a: 123). Dupuy (2002: 182) proposes the following definition of populism based on Laclau's ideas: a populist discourse appeals to 'the people as nation' embodied in the figure of a

charismatic leader that promises to dissolve the power of the nation's enemies, and to bring the nation back to a glorious past.

For Laclau (2005a: 137), populist movements originate in a crisis of representation in which different sectors have demands that cannot be fulfilled under traditional political structures. The challenge for populism is to discursively organise dispersed demands in what he calls an '*equivalential whole*', that is, a coherent set of shared ideas that can be mobilised at once by a charismatic leader. Therefore, populism behaves as an '*empty signifier*', that is, a signifier that can articulate different demands around it, creating a struggle to fill its emptiness with a single hegemonic meaning (Laclau, 2005a). However, the process by which certain demands become able to represent the whole in a specific society requires careful historical and contextual analysis.

The integration of popular demands implies the construction of new spaces of representation, as well as frontiers to separate the will of 'the people' from the 'others'. However, populism purposely keeps such frontiers '*imprecise and fluctuating*' (Laclau, 2005a: 118), since the absence of clarity is a strategic condition for increasing the symbolism of certain concepts: the more demands an empty signifier can convey, the more powerful it becomes.

The logic of discourse depends nonetheless upon contextual power relations that render some social articulations more likely than others, leaving a multitude of substantive possibilities underdeveloped. Therefore, different articulations of social relations privilege certain agents over others. For Mudde (2004), there are three '*thin ideologies*' that articulate legitimacy of a political system: populism, elitism and pluralism. Whereas both populism and elitism share a Manichaeian view of social relations, the first sees moral authority lying in the common people, whereas the second sees the elite as the only legitimate holder of authority. Conversely, pluralism refuses a Manichaeian articulation of society and considers that pluralism and contrasting views are at the heart of a plural society.

Hawkins (2010) argues that populist discourse cannot be fully understood without understanding the set of beliefs that motivate such discourse. Therefore, the scholar considers that Mudde's '*thin-centred ideologies*' could be better defined as '*worldviews*', that is, '*a set of fundamental beliefs –about the nature or the political world– subconsciously expressed and shaped by language*' (Hawkins, 2010: ix). While acknowledging the importance of discourse in populism, Hawkins goes further in stressing the relationship between language (discourse) and ideas (worldview), which become '*almost indistinguishable when we examine deeply held, unarticulated assumptions about politics*' such as populism (Hawkins, 2010: 10). Therefore, I

agree with Hawkins that populism can be defined as a worldview expressed through discourse. Linking the debate of hegemonic empty signifiers to the present study, it could be argued that the Cuban Revolution has become the empty signifier that attempts to integrate all popular demands.

2.2.4 - Discursive Conceptualisations of Populism

The hegemonic articulation of discourse is, for Ernesto Laclau, at the basis of both structural and subjective positions (Laclau, 1990a; Boucher, 2009). Whereas Foucault and other scholars distinguish between discursive, non-discursive and even extra-discursive practices (Howarth, 2015: 4), Laclau and Mouffe (Howarth, 2015: 5) argue that everything is discursive, since all practices and objects are immersed in specific systems of signification, and it is through this belonging that they become meaningful. Even if Laclau and Mouffe acknowledge the existence of an outside reality, they consider that the only way to make sense of this outside reality is through discourse, much in the line of Foucault:²⁴

Is Foucault saying –as some of his critics have charged– that nothing exists outside of discourse? In fact, Foucault does not deny that things can have a real, material existence in the world. What he does argue is that “nothing has any meaning outside of discourse” [...]. As Laclau and Mouffe put it, “we use [the term discourse] to emphasise the fact that every social configuration is meaningful”. (Hall, 1997: 44-45)

While Silvio Waisbord (2013b) defines populism essentially as a political strategy which can manifest itself through a specific type of discourse, Ernesto Laclau considers that discourse is not just linguistic or textual, but relational. In his own words,

I do not mean something that is essentially restricted to the areas of speech and writing, but any complex of elements in which relations play a constitutive role. This means that elements do not pre-exist the relational complex but are constituted through it. (Laclau, 2005a: 68)

From a Laclanian perspective, populism is not to be seen as the content of a political movement or ideology, but a mode of structuring this content. Therefore, populism is defined in ontological –focused on relations– rather than ontic terms –focused on content– (Laclau, 2005b: 153). What

²⁴ Laclau and Mouffe’s defense of the primacy of discourse, and the implications it entails, is further discussed in chapter three.

matters is that popular demands are articulated as equivalential, opposed to a common enemy that goes against the popular will. This leads Laclau (2005b: 157) to conclude that '*there is no populism without discursive construction of an enemy*'. The conceptualisation of populism as a discursive articulation of social demands implies that 'the people' and 'the enemy' are social constructs, rather than pre-existing categories. Therefore, their construction is always contingent; the product of the struggle between different hegemonic political projects.

While this thesis draws on Laclau's definition of populism as discourse, and uses certain analytical elements of Discourse Theory, it combines an ontological –based on relations– and an ontic –based on content– approach to populism. In this sense, this thesis looks at the relational practices by which the Cuban newspaper *Granma* constructs the boundaries between 'the people' and 'the enemy' through the contingent articulation of popular demands. However, this is complemented through a discursive analysis of nomination, predication and argumentation strategies in *Granma*.²⁵ Furthermore, this thesis does not see the antagonistic construction of 'the people' versus an enemy from a structuralist, two-dimensional perspective. Instead, it draws on a poststructuralist logic in which the construction of exclusionary frontiers is constitutive of the production of meaning. Therefore, *Granma*'s discursive articulation of 'the people' and 'the enemy' is seen to be contingent and contextual, influenced by the internal contradictions within a given structure of meaning, as well as by the rearticulation of the structure through dislocation, and the production of new empty signifiers. The following lines will discuss the elements of Ernesto Laclau's analytical framework that will guide the analysis of the case study, that is, the discursive articulation of 'the Cuban people' in times of national debate.

2.3 - The Discourse Theoretical Approach to Populism

This thesis draws on Ernesto Laclau's (2005a) definition of populism as discourse. Therefore, there is the need from the outset to clarify Laclau's conceptualisation of both concepts. I would like to start by defining discourse. Laclau, a post-structuralist himself, understands discourse as '*a practice that constructs the social*' (Howarth, 2000: 5). According to this definition, the social world is constructed through discursive practices that attempt to (partially) fix meaning. In other words, discourse refers to a '*structured entity*' (Carpentier and De Cleen, 2007: 267) that results from a process of articulation. All discourses produce an unstable structure in which meaning

²⁵ The ontological and epistemological implications of looking at populism from both an ontic and an ontological approach are further discussed in chapter three.

needs to be permanently constructed (Laclau, 1988: 254). Articulation is a discursive practice that manages to fix hegemonic meaning, making society intelligible through a process of unification-simplification (Gaonkar, 2012). The concept of articulation is further developed below, in the section dedicated to the discourse theoretical approach to populism.

In developing a Discourse Theoretical approach, I will define populism as a logic of articulation of popular demands around a collective project, embodied by ‘the people’, which is antagonistic to other potential hegemonic projects, embodied by ‘the enemy’ (Howarth, 2015: 13).²⁶ In other words, populist discourse naturalises a specific construction of ‘the people’ as a unified ‘us’, opposed to an antagonistic ‘them’, which engage in an endless fight for hegemonic meaning.

For Ernesto Laclau, society is far from being an intelligible and self-grounding totality (Gaonkar, 2012: 189). In Gaonkar’s (2012: 190) words, ‘*[t]he social is the groundless ground, unfixed, expansive and dispersive, on which the ‘political’ operates to figure, fix and institute the ‘social’ and to make it legible, hence legitimate*’. Therefore, from a Laclaunian perspective, it is the political that constitutes the social (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). This constitution, however, does not aspire to a complete dissolution of social antagonisms by instituting a logic that unifies society once and for all. Instead, the political constitution of the social recognises the heterogeneity of the social, and the necessarily provisional, contingent and partial fixation of meaning (Gaonkar, 2012).

While totality is unachievable under a poststructuralist approach, Laclau (2005a: 70) contends that the representation of totality is necessary for signification. This contradiction is solved through the fictional representation of totality through a process of articulation. Articulation is, for Laclau, the practice that constitutes a specific discursive formation and makes it look cohesive and coherent per se. In other words, ‘*articulation is Laclau’s name for the practice that gives shape and identity to a discursive formation and makes the elements within it intelligible in their relationality*’ (Gaonkar, 2012: 194). The process of articulation is, therefore, able to (temporarily) fix a hegemonic meaning through a process of unification and simplification embodied by an empty signifier.

Following Saussure, Howarth contends that an empty signifier is ‘*a signifier without a signified*’, that is, an image or a sound that is detached from meaning (Laclau, 1994: 66). The reason why this detachment between the signifier and the signified takes place is, according to the scholar,

²⁶ Ernesto Laclau considers that popular demands are the basic form of political articulation (Laclau, 2005a: 154). In this thesis, the term ‘popular demands’ will refer to demands that arise from ‘the people’.

because existing structures of signs are unable to fully represent the totality of social reality. They can temporarily fix meaning through the use of equivalential chains, but this articulation is constitutively incomplete and unstable (Laclau, 1994: 66).

Linking Laclau's neo-Gramscian theory of discourse to Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis, Laclau (Laclau, 2005a: 116) asserts that hegemony is constructed through the process by which a partial object assumes the identity of 'a Thing', becoming '*the embodiment of a mythical fullness*'. As Kaplan puts it,

In psychoanalytic terms, the emergence of such an empty signifier corresponds to an affective "radical investment" that confers on it "the dignity of the Thing"—that is, of an object which, in standing in for the constitutively missing "true" object of desire, comes to function directly as that object. (Kaplan, 2010: 260)

2.3.1 - The Logic of Articulation

Ernesto Laclau (2005a) argues that political articulations can adopt two opposed logics. At the one extreme, demands can be seen as individual 'requests' that can be satisfied within the institutional mechanisms established by the system in power (Laclau, 2005b: 155). In this case, subjects accept the legitimacy of existing mechanisms and demands are dealt with in an administrative, consensual way. They are, then, articulated through a 'differential logic'.

At the other extreme, demands can be seen as 'imposing a request'. When the existing system is unable to satisfy particular demands, subjects start sharing a sense of frustration. This shared frustration can be addressed against an institutional system that is unable to meet popular demands, or can be hegemonically channelled against an external enemy. Unmet demands are articulated following a 'logic of equivalence' when an empty signifier is able to unify different popular demands against a shared enemy. Therefore, the emergence of equivalential chains requires the division of the social camp in two antagonistic poles: this is what Laclau calls '*the people versus power contradiction*'. In his own words, a populist rupture is produced with '*the dichotomisation of the social space through the creation of an internal frontier, and the construction of an equivalential chain between unfulfilled demands*' (Laclau, 2005b: 156). The passage below can illustrate this idea:

[A]n institutional discourse is one that attempts to make the limits of the discursive formation coincide with the limits of the community... The opposite takes place in the case of populism: a frontier of exclusion divides society in two camps. The 'people',

in that case, is something less than the totality of the members of the community: it is a partial component which nevertheless aspires to be conceived as the only legitimate totality. (Laclau, 2005b: 81)

In summary, Laclau (2006a) considers two necessary conditions for the rise of populism: (1) the existence of structural conditions that hinder the ability of the political order to integrate new popular demands into existing equivalential chains, thereby generating a shared popular frustration, and (2) the articulation of popular frustration against a shared enemy.

Laclau considers that social relations always entail a struggle between populist and institutional logics, or what Margaret Canovan (1999) calls the pragmatic –institutional– and the redemptive –populist– side of populism. In this sense, it is important to recognise not only the populist logic that guides the construction of social relations in the Cuban Revolution, opposing unified popular demands by an enemy that threatens their fulfilment, but also the institutional mechanisms by which diverse popular demands are recognised in their diversity, and negotiated rather than antagonised.

Drawing on Gérard Genette's study of narrative in Proust, Laclau considers that the unity and coherence of a discourse is a rhetorical effect of catachresis through a combination of two types of tropes, 'metaphoric chains' and a 'metonymic net' (Kaplan, 2010: 268).²⁷ For Laclau, two elements can be articulated through metonymy, that is, a contingent combination of social relations. The contingency of the combination can dissipate and become naturalised in discourse. In this case, the elements would become articulated through metaphor, and the relation between them would appear inherent to their nature (rather than contingent). Laclau defines hegemony as follows:

[Hegemony is] the movement from metonymy to metaphor, from contingent articulation to essential belonging. The name—of a social movement, of an ideology, of a political institution—is always the metaphorical crystallisation of contents whose analogical links result from concealing the contingent contiguity of their metonymical origins. (Laclau, 2008: 69)

Therefore, Laclau (2006a: 653) argues that the creation of the empty signifier is not theoretical, but catachrestical. The empty signifier, by naming popular demands, also gives them a discursive

²⁷ Other academics, such as Vickers, have criticised the danger of reducing all rhetoric to two tropes, metaphor and metonymy, or to one, catachresis (see Kaplan, 2010).

presence and creates a new people through the articulation of popular demands via equivalential and differential chains. The scholar contends that this creation is *ex nihilo*.

Since totality is unachievable, and therefore fictitious, from a Laclaunian approach, '*there is no social agent whose will coincides with the actual workings of society conceived as a totality*' (Laclau, 2014: 153). Therefore, subject demands become split between forces of difference that keep the particularity of demands, and logics of equivalence that conceal this difference so as to articulate popular demands through their unified opposition to a shared enemy.

From a Laclaunian perspective, individuals are not coherent, self-defined totalities. Therefore, the scholar refutes the idea of a specific class as the natural agent of hegemonic fight. In his own words, a subject is not '*an agent both rational and transparent to itself*' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 115). Instead, a subject, and subject positions, are '*referential i*

dentities which must be split up into a series of localised subject positions', which are socially rather than individually articulated (Laclau, 2014: 154). Subject positions are socially articulated and contingent since they are 'differential', that is, they find their identity in relation to their difference to other possible positions, and 'cross-embedded', meaning, they arise from the combination between individual and collective positions (Gaonkar, 2012: 194).

If subject identities are not given, how does a subject identity become the main player of a hegemonic struggle, being able to represent the totality of social struggles? Laclau provides an answer in his theorisation of equivalential and differential chains of meaning. Certain subjectivities can become articulated through chains of equivalence around nodal points, that is, partially-fixed signifiers able to maintain the cohesion of the chain, as well as its antagonism to the hegemonic order (Gaonkar, 2012).

2.3.2 - The Logic of Disarticulation

In the previous section, articulation has been defined as contingent and temporary. Therefore, articulations are always threatened by competing logics, which can 'dislocate' their elements. Furthermore, there is always a '*surplus of meaning*' that cannot be successfully integrated (Laclau, 1990b: 90). This surplus is what Laclau calls '*floating signifiers*', which can be potentially integrated in opposing hegemonic social projects and, therefore, threaten the hegemonic unity. In theory, the category of 'floating signifiers' overlaps with 'empty signifiers', since even the strongest signifiers are inherently unstable, and exposed to dislocation. However,

empty signifiers refer in practice to temporarily stable articulations, while floating signifiers refers to the elements that are yet to be integrated in these articulations at a given time.

The disarticulation of populist chains of equivalence can take place through two mechanisms. A populist logic of political articulation can become more institutionalised and disaggregate popular demands by solving them individually within the institutional mechanisms provided by the system. On the other hand, a populist articulation can keep its antagonising character by preserving the antagonistic nature of empty signifiers –their ‘*radicalism*’, in Laclau’s terms–, while changing the individual demands that are articulated around them. For instance, the chain can incorporate new subject demands, displacing the frontiers of belonging.

Summarising, ‘*all identity is constructed within this tension between the differential and equivalential logics*’ (Laclau, 2005a: 70). This constant tension exists because structures of meaning are by nature unstable and incomplete, inherently threatened by the dislocation of the elements of the equivalential chains, that is, by an external threat to the hegemonic project. The dislocation of available structures of meaning renders the contingency of their arrangement visible, allowing the articulation of floating signifiers in new equivalential chains, and the emergence of new hegemonic projects. Whereas this process of rearticulation is not predetermined, it follows the dislocation of specific previous structures, that is, the new process or articulation takes place within a specific context (Laclau, 1990b: 31).

2.3.3 - Alternative Approaches to Laclau’s Discourse Theory

Ernesto Laclau draws on poststructuralist theory, which sees social reality as a constructed, contingent and a necessarily incomplete system of meaning, rather than intelligible through reason. Poststructuralist theory is a tool for opposing Marxist class reductionism, economic determinism and rationalist essentialism. Therefore, the Argentinian scholar tries to deconstruct the opposition between the object, or reality, and the subject, or subjectivity, through a poststructuralist approach (Howarth, 2015: 4). However, poststructuralism has received criticism from different strands of thought.

Rationalists such as Jürgen Habermas or Charles Taylor criticise poststructuralism for retaining certain structuralism and, therefore, an excessively linguistic and discursive approach to social relations that reduces subjectivity to the product of structures, undermining the possibility of autonomous subjectivity and emancipation (Howarth, 2015: 2). Other criticism comes from the

'self-defeating relativism' of poststructuralism to the point that any social articulations seem possible, what Geoff Boucher calls '*the charmed circle of ideology*' (Boucher, 2009).

Furthermore, some Marxists and critical realists criticise poststructuralism for undermining the influence of structural factors on social relations (Howarth, 2015: 2). The discursive construction of 'the people' becomes an incarnation of this impossible unity of popular will. The distance between original popular demands and the arbitrary way in which those are temporarily fixed in a certain context produces a gap, however. Therefore, empty signifiers are created through what Laclau (2004: 307) defines as '*a complex situation whose mechanisms—largely unconscious—escape the "subject" of the decision; and that this subject does not precede the decision but is rather the product of the latter*'. Laclau's conceptualisation of 'the people' has received some criticism. Drawing on the work of de Man, Kaplan (2010: 276) contends that 'the people' are not constructed as an empty signifier, but as an allegory in which they openly become a metaphor able to mediate '*the production of meaning by forestalling the integration of a discursive totality*'.

Kaplan (2010) contends that Laclau's theory wipes out the processes by which empty signifiers and equivalential chains are constructed and emerge. Similarly, Lew Zipin (2004: 227) considers that Laclau's body of work avoids any coherent explanation about the way in which equivalential chains take shape. This suggests that some rules of formation can exist ontologically in advance, while others have a mysterious origin.

Some of the main criticisms to Laclau's conceptualisation of populism regard the degree of autonomy of 'the people' both articulating and challenging hegemonic chains of meaning. For instance, Torfig (1999: 67) understands political decision-making as non-algorithmic; that is, as the result of a process of negotiation and consensus-building through persuasion that goes beyond simply identifying an empty signifier, or a shared set of popular demands. Laclau challenges the structuralist perception of people's dependency on structures and recognises that autonomy is inherent to the hegemonic struggle. From a Laclauian approach, popular identities are created and modified along the fluctuation of equivalential chains of popular demands. However, popular agency also emerges through an interaction with heterogeneous, non-integrated projects or subjectivities that challenge the hegemonic discourse (Laclau, 1990b: 31-32; Laclau, 2005a: 107-108). Through structural dislocation, non-integrated external subjectivities become visible and differentiated, constructing new subjectivities –that is, agency– and expanding the 'political frontiers' of possibility. Therefore, the process by which popular subjectivity is constructed is not top-down, or algorithmic, but entails an endless negotiation between 'the people' and those who temporarily represent popular demands (Laclau, 2005a: 167-174). From this perspective, social

reality should be understood from what a hegemonic project prevents, that is, from the alternative political projects that fight for hegemonic meaning (Laclau, 1990b: 32).

2.4 - The Study of Populism through Media Discourse

Without taking a media-centric stance, I argue in this thesis that the media factor should be taken into account in the study of populism, paying special attention to the wide range of ways in which the news media and populism intertwine. In developing Simons' (2011) line of argument, I argue that the news media are essential tools for constructing and mediating political discourses and ideas, as well as emotional collective identifications. Therefore, I consider the media as having a main role in constructing and helping consolidate hegemonic narratives of 'the people' versus the power contradiction, whether from a populist, elitist or pluralist point of view.

Even if populism is a widely studied subject, there is a gap in the literature regarding the complex relations between populism and the news media (Waisbord, 2003: 201). Some studies have explored the role of the media in supporting the emergence of right-wing populism in western democracies. In the Latin American context, however, the cause-effects studies are scarce and research has adopted different perspectives. For instance, there are some studies concerning populist media regulation, populist politicians' ideals of the news media, or the use of permanent campaigns. However, the scope of previous research is often narrow both geographically and temporarily.

According to Simons (2011: 201), Laclau's theory of the construction of 'the people' versus power contradiction is incomplete as it leaves unexplained the processes by which such construction is achieved. Therefore, an inclusion of media and cultural theory would help to explain that *'the people become citizens and are constituted as political subjects by means of cultural practices and mediating technologies that connect them, whether differentially or equivalentially'* (Simons, 2011: 217). However, the role of media discourse, defined by Macdonald (2003: 1) as the *'changing modes of configuring the relationship between media texts and the social world'*, should not be exaggerated (Macdonald, 2003: 9).

Looking at populism through media discourse is based on the realisation that the news media not only reflect the social, but also helps constructing versions of the realities that it presents. Therefore, media narratives influence and shape public perception of the reality. For instance, Fairclough (1995) considers all media texts offer: (1) specific representations of the world, (2) the constructions of the identities of those involved in the stories and (3) the construction of the

relationships between them. According to this definition, the media would be a key factor in the articulation of a specific discourse of popular sovereignty versus politics as usual.

Foucault's contribution to the concept of discourse is used as a referent in many studies of media discourse (Fairclough, 1995; Macdonald, 2003). Foucault argues that all forms of communication and, therefore, discourse, cannot capture reality in its external form. Although Foucault sees the ontological possibility of reality existing outside human discourse, what is lacking for him is the practical possibility of measuring it. According to this view, reality can only be reached through exchanges of ideas about reality and, therefore, through constructionist discourses on the reality that is being discursively referred to (Macdonald, 2003: 11). In this respect, Hawkins' (2010) definition of populism as a set of ideas about the political world, constantly shaped and expressed through language, follows Foucault's logic of discourse.

Although it might not be possible to search a single truth about reality, it is possible to approach the external world by comparing different and confronting discourses about it, or identifying patterns linked to certain worldviews and ideologies (Fairclough, 1995: 15; Macdonald, 2003: 18). Therefore, the discursive construction of 'the people' is only possible in its opposition to the discursive construction of an external other. Therefore, 'the people' versus power contradiction would be the pattern that links popular discourses throughout time and space.

The relation between media discourse of ideology is fundamental to understanding the media's role in reproducing dominant ideologies and its ability to challenge them. In this sense, Macdonald (2003) considers that discourses always carry latent ideologies, although they are only activated in specific contexts. Fairclough (1995: 14) has defined ideology as '*meaning in the service of power*'. Ernesto Laclau (2006b: 103) offers a similar approach to ideology, which he defines as a discursive 'closure' that stabilises certain meanings within a given context, creating the impression that these meanings are natural rather than constructed. Therefore, media discourse carries an ideological meaning inasmuch as it conceals the social construction of reality, naturalising hegemonic views of reality that help to perpetuate unequal relations of power and domination.

Fairclough points out that ideologies in media discourse are usually implicit and naturalised through presuppositions which are commonsensical for the elite, the producers of discourse, and their audiences. Those presuppositions are, therefore, pre-constructed elements that link media texts to other types of texts and, therefore, to other types of discourses (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1998). The media choice between the available discourses in a social domain (orders of discourse) and, therefore, the way in which they are stressed or backgrounded, would have

ideological implications. This means that both media language and discourse constitute relevant footprints in the study of processes of sociocultural change.

However, media discourses have the potential to both reproduce and transform the social world (Fairclough, 1995: 29). The role of populism consists precisely on transforming the media role at the service of the status quo into a media serving the role of the populist leader. In order to accomplish the populist goal, a complete rupture from media systems and media discourse are necessary in the process. Populist media strategies should be seen in the broader context of bringing ‘the people’ and the leader closer together through a revolution in political communication (Waisbord, 2013b: 133).

In the following sub-sections, I will address the complex relations between the news media and populist movements in Latin America from a historical and regional perspective, while stressing the similarities and differences in the more widely studied European context. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate the advantages of taking the media factor into account in the study of populism. Without taking a mediacentric stance, I stress the many ways in which the news media and populism converge.

First, I will debate the news media’s responsibility in promoting populism. Then, I will focus on populist leaders’ ideal vision of the mass media and their attempt to restructure media systems in Latin America. Finally, I will discuss some relevant analyses that have addressed the relation between populist discourse and the media, stressing the excessive focus on television and the tendency to neglect historical views.

2.4.1 - Can the Media promote Populism?

Debates on media and populism have traditionally been based on the idea of the media’s capacity and will to manipulate the masses. The Frankfurt School of Social Research coined the term ‘*cultural populism*’, based on the idea that the media in capitalist democracies manipulates the masses by suppressing critical reasoning and thereby demobilising them (McGuian, 1992: 47). Similarly, mass society theories predominant in the 1950s and 1960s regarded the masses as irrational and easily manipulated by both demagogic leaders and the media (Waisbord, 2003: 203). In this context, the media would facilitate the unification of the masses around a populist discourse. This is also the conclusion drawn by Chomsky and Herman’s’ propaganda model, by which the media –whether public or private– contribute to the propagandist machine, promoting the government’s goals and silencing oppositional views (Waisbord, 2003).

The agenda-setting theory stresses that the prominence of a topic or personality in the media can affect their public salience (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Kioussis and McCombs, 2004). Usually, prominent news messages receive more media space or time (Watt et al., 1993: 415) and make topics or personalities more salient –easier to remember (Schefeule, 1999). Similarly, levels of media attention can determine the public’s familiarity of political leaders and their messages (Hopmann et al., 2010). Finally, the second to second agenda-setting theory argues that the media not only inform us of the salience and ideas of leaders, but also influence *how we think* about them (McCombs et al., 1997). Since the media can influence citizens’ perceived images of a candidate, they can also help (de-)legitimise a leader (Blumler, 2003; Mazzoleni et al., 2003). Therefore, Stewart, Mazzoleni and Horsfield (2003: 236) consider media prominence to be an essential factor for their public legitimisation of populist leaders: ‘*any media coverage advantages contentious political figures; it enhances their visibility and furthers their ends, by producing some kind of public legitimisation*’. However, the mediatisation of the political image can come with some negative knock-on effects.

Following Marxist and post-Marxist schools of thought, populist leaders assume that news media frames and debates have great effects on public opinion and on voting. Manipulation, brainwash and subliminal persuasion are often used by populist leaders, to establish their power over the news media (Waisbord, 2013b: 24). Populist leaders have often seen the media not as politically independent institutions, but linked to elitist ideological positions. Following this logic, journalism works for the maintenance of oligarchical and imperialist voices and interests which are in opposition to public interest. This could be the case in Latin America, where populist leaders see the traditional media as controlled by an elite interlinked to foreign capital that excludes popular voices and participation.

In western democracies, scholarly debates on media and populism are seen from the perspective of perpetuating political polarisation and damaging deliberative debate. The news media are seen to be promoting, consciously or not, popular cynicism towards traditional politics and, therefore, legitimising populist claims. The main argument is that the news media and populism share certain communicative interests –such as the discrediting of politics as usual– and discursive practices –for example the preference for personalisation, oversimplification or scandal– that make populism intrinsically newsworthy. However, by giving voice to populist claims, the news media provide free publicity and wide dissemination to populist messages.

Mazzoleni, Stewart and Horsfield (2003) studied the media’s power to construct and represent neo-populist parties across Europe, Asia and Latin America. Throughout their book, several

scholars took ‘the media factor’ into account in the analysis of populism. The media factor is described as ‘*the complex of processes that are typical of mass communication and especially of the news media in democratic environments*’ (Blumler, 2003: xvi). This is not to say that the media, themselves, can determine populist leaders’ success. The news media interact with an array of political actors, influencing and being influenced by populist discourses. Nevertheless, scholars studying the relationship between the news media and the upsurge and consolidation of right wing populism in western countries argue that the media have contributed, directly or indirectly, to the consolidation of neo-populist movements (Mazzoleni, 2003; Moffit, 2017). For instance, Stewart, Mazzoleni and Horsfield (2003: 233) argue that the media ‘*happen to be allied to populist movements by engaging with people’s moods, catering to their entertainment needs, and sharpening negative stories*’.

Stewart, Mazzoleni, and Horsfield (2003) base their rationale on the assumption that the media play a central role in the early consolidation of populist movements. For Mazzoleni (2003: 2) ‘*[t]he institutions of the mass media play crucial roles in the dialectic of democracy versus populism*’. In this sense, Mazzoleni (2003) contends that the news media engage in a non-intentional relationship with populist movements, expanding their visibility by the simple fact of reporting on them. However, this engagement can also be intentional, since the mass media and neo-populist movements share similar key narratives. The interaction between the media and populism would depend, then, upon institutional and structural factors and would vary depending on the context (Mazzoleni et al., 2003: 6). One of the essential conditions would be the degree to which the media is embedded in supporting the idiosyncrasy of the ruling elite, and whether the populist movement is in power, or in opposition.

One of the main debates within media and populism is whether the media should give voice and, therefore, help expand controversial populist discourses, even if they promote causes contrary to democratic ideals, such as racism, accumulation of powers in the executive or the polarisation of society into two irreconcilable camps. The media stress on the coverage of populist leaders can give them free publicity and help to consolidate their position in the public discourse. Furthermore, by paying attention to neo-populist leaders, the media help to not only legitimise them as mainstream political actors, but to legitimise their controversial claims representing public concern, as well.

More important than media attention, Blumler (2003: xix) contends that what matters is the media’s performance in the ground-laying phase of populism. If the media are not able to discuss topics of public concern, if they do not promote serious ways of debating possible causes and

solutions but instead promote public scepticism by presenting traditional political institutions and practices as inefficient, then the media can pave the way for populist leaders. The main regret regarding the western media is precisely its readiness to disseminate populist prejudices and fearful messages in a decontextualised and unchallenging manner (Miller et al., 1996: 84). Therefore, the danger does not lie in populist appeals to ‘the people’, but in the media’s uncritical coverage of populist messages that discredit democratic politics (Dupuy, 2002).

It could be argued that the media give voice to ‘alternative’ populist messages as a way of proving their commitment to watchdog journalism and, therefore, to the criticism of traditional politics. However, in doing so, they contribute to discredit politics and representative democracy. This is what Taguieff (2007: 77) called the ‘*guignolisation of French politics*’, a sort of daily prime time parodisation of traditional leaders that fuels citizens’ loss of faith in politics.

For instance, Birenbaum and Villa’s study (2003) concluded that the French media contributed to creating a negative vision of politics that was exploited by Le Pen’s Front National (FN). The great media interest in the FN’s electoral results contributed to establish ‘the Party’ as the main challenger to traditional politics, giving Le Pen a monopoly on moral discourse in relation to family planning and immigration debates (Birenbaum and Villa, 2003: 62). Similarly, Biorcio’s (2003) study of the media coverage of the *Lega Nord* in Italy in the early 1990s concluded that the media system provided relevant (though indirect) support to ‘the Party’ by constantly criticising and delegitimising traditional politics. A different strategy was used by the Australian media elite, which thought they could contain Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party by refusing to cover her overtly racist comments. However, as Horsfield and Stewart (2003) argue, in doing so the media also failed to reflect the popular concerns and their disaffection with the mainstream political parties, helping Hanson consolidate herself as the real voice of popular concerns.

The news media’s interest in populism does not seem casual, and I argue that there is often a symbiotic relation between media and populism. Media discourses share certain characteristics of ‘the media logic’ (Mazzoleni, 2004: 7), such as their alleged challenge to a corrupt official system, their claim to represent people’s real interests, their tendency towards personalisation, the use of tabloid-like, emotional and direct language or the preference for sensational sound-bites (Blumler, 2003; Mazzoleni et al., 2003; Plasner and Ulram, 2003). For instance, the personalisation of populist leaders perfectly fits media news values and, therefore, ‘*mediagenic*’, magnetic leaders prone to controversial statements usually become irresistible for the media (Mazzoleni, 2004: 1).

The interest of the news media in offering a message as clear and simple as possible means that they are prone to simplifying issues and adopting a populist discourse when discussing certain issues, for instance, by presenting news as a sports race with heroes and enemies, or over-representing political scandals (stereotypical representations, few and antagonistic points of view). For instance, Canovan (2005) stresses political leaders' use of direct 'tabloid-like' language to propose simple and direct political solutions to the problems of 'the people'.

When the media reproduce populist messages exclusively for their emotive and polemical nature, without offering any critical assessment or broader context to the public, we can talk about 'media populism'. In this sense, Mazzoleni and his colleagues (2003) consider media populism a pre-condition for the consolidation of populist leaders. Traditionally, tabloid media have been considered closer to populist leaders' followers, language, and discourse –such as a preference for drama, infotainment, conflict and anti-establishment narratives– (Akkerman, 2011: 932). On the other hand, the quality media, linked to traditional elites, are expected to dedicate less coverage to populist leaders, and in a mostly negative tone.

The populist bias of popular newspapers has been called by Akkerman (2011) into question in a frame analysis of elitist and tabloid Dutch and British newspapers. Surprisingly, the analysis revealed that popular newspapers reproduced even more elite frames than the quality press in their news stories. Mazzoleni (2003: 7; 2004: 3) contends that all types of media are vulnerable to some degree of media populism. Even when the media perform an 'adversarial' model, behaving as watchdogs for the government, parties and institutions, they can encourage people's disengagement from politics and, thereby, indirectly justify populist leaders' rationale.

While the contribution of populism in damaging democratic practices remains unclear, it seems that populism itself has become 'popularised' and 'democratised' in a mediatised political context. Many authors agree that the prominence of populist messages in the media has produced a legitimisation of both populist discourse and a populist political communication style, which have become widespread even in democratic politics. In Jagers and Walgrave's words (2007: 321), populism is popular nowadays. Soft types of populism have become '*a common discursive strategy employed by opposition parties, fuelling discontent in society and challenging the government by identifying itself and siding with the people*' (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007: 323).

In a semantically confusing terrain, the news media are accused of this irresponsible popularisation and trivialisation, by which populism becomes a synonym of demagoguery, political irresponsibility, ultra-nationalism, pseudo-democracy, or even video-politics. As Taguieff (1998: 9) puts it, populism has been accused of being too simplistic; demonised through

what he calls '*a new sort of media demagoguery*'. Therefore, the anti-populist campaign coming from the traditional elites (whether political, mediatic or institutional), far from attempting to understand the phenomenon, would have intensified the media's spectacularisation of populism.

Bos, van der Brug and de Vreese (2011) have studied populist leaders' dependency on the news media for building their public image, spreading their message, and gaining votes. The scholars analysed the 2006 Dutch elections, comparing panel survey data with content analysis of over a thousand news stories. The scholars used three criteria to assess the way in which the media influenced public perceptions of effectiveness and legitimacy, both among mainstream and populist leaders. In order to do so, they evaluated their prominence in the media –time/space received, their perceived authoritativeness, knowledge on the topics they addressed– and their use of a populist style. The findings indicated that, while the use of a populist communicational style could harm mainstream leaders, the legitimacy and effectiveness of populist leaders was not affected by their use of a populist style. However, on average populist leaders appeared just as dependent on the media as other leaders. Therefore, the media can behave as both the friend and the foe of populist leaders (Bos et al., 2011). These findings are relevant in a context in which populist rhetoric and political style have become popular among mainstream political leaders, which try to gain media and public attention by using populist communicative and discursive strategies.

2.5 - Media and Populism in Latin America

In the previous section, I discussed the relationship between the media and populism from a theoretical perspective. Current academic debates have examined two interrelated questions: (1) Can the news media promote populism –as discourse–, and contribute to the consolidation of populist governments –as political practice? And (2) Is populism –as discourse and as practice– a threat to the right to freedom of speech and freedom of the press? The first question has been examined in the previous section. Here, I will address the second question through the lenses of populist governments in Latin America. In this section, I offer some examples of the relationship between populist leaders and movements and the mass media throughout the 20th century so to conveniently contextualise current debates on media and populism. The main goal is to look at the way left-wing leaders across the continent, who have been labelled as 'radical populists', have perceived and influenced the role of the media.

In this section, I will examine some of the following questions: Are populist governments in Latin America fostering the democratisation of media systems, as they claim, or are they using the news

media as a tool to advance a hegemonic populist discourse? Who benefits from the structural changes in media policy that have been implemented by these governments? Do they benefit previously excluded sectors of the population, such as ‘the underdog’ and indigenous communities? Or, instead, are they institutionalising a new form of political control, reshaping old ‘clientelar’ networks? I believe that the Latin American experience offers interesting lessons for understanding the way in which populist discourse influences media policies in practice. Therefore, it is essential to understand research on media, populism and citizenship in Latin America beyond a regional scope (Lugo-Ocando and García Santamaría, 2015; Rovira Kaltwasser and Taggart, 2016; Segura and Waisbord, 2016). Mazzoleni (2004: 4) contends that the media are usually ‘*instrumentum regni*’ in the sense that they are ‘*legitimising tools of the existing social and political order*’. In Latin America, Lugo-Ocando (2008: 1) considers that the mass media were created by the elites and used as ‘(a) *commodities to be exploited by the private sector and (b) mechanisms of political and societal control*’. The overlapping of goals between traditional media and elites, interacting in a way that reinforces each other’s interests, has been called ‘*collateralism*’ (Mazzoleni, 2004). Waisbord (2013a) relates media ‘collateralism’ to the region’s tradition of advocacy reporting which originated in the 19th century partisan press that emerged after the independence movements and the birth of the party system.

During the 20th century, the media in Latin America maintained a strong political role of mobilisation in when concerning unions, nationalist groups or religious movements and, even after the wave of commercialisation swept over the region, journalism remained far from the ‘professional’ standards of the mainstream commercial press (Lugo-Ocando, 2008). The region did not experience the adequate context necessary for consolidating journalism as an independent profession, such as strong democracy, stability of the media industries, or legal regulation of media laws that ensures independence from executive power (Waisbord, 2013b).

A small group of media conglomerates with interests in key industrial sectors has traditionally controlled audiences and advertising. Those few conglomerates have historically been linked to power through ‘clientelistic’ linkages, influencing political communication, media reports and direct investment on their industries (Lugo-Ocando, 2008). Therefore, they have become part of a complex network of economic interests and political ambitions, withdrawing from any pretence of balance, informative quality or public interest (Waisbord, 2013b) –for instance, the promotion of military coups by certain journalistic industries is well known.

Several scholars have identified the direct collaboration between the media and populist political leaders as endemic in Latin America (Mazzoleni, 2004; Lugo-Ocando and García Santamaría,

2015; Waisbord and Segura, 2016). Throughout the region, different leaders have courted the media in order to promote a positive coverage of populist messages (Stewart, Mazzoleni and Horsfield: 232). Whenever media moguls have followed the official line, populist governments have offered them privileges, perpetuating media clientelism. Furthermore, populist '*media activism*' has concentrated media decisions in the executive, using media laws to constrain free speech, coerce the judiciary and limit the freedom of critical citizen journalism (Waisbord, 2012). The use of the media for demonising political enemies, whether populist or traditional leaders, can lead to a spiral of polarisation that reaches all levels of debate.

Populist governments legitimise their attempts to transform the media structure in the precarious representativeness of a traditionally elitist media landscape. The problem is that populist governments tend to see the media in a Manichaeian way, divided into those who protect 'our' common goals (the populist leader, 'the people', national interests), and those who protect 'their' interests (the oligarchic forces, the elites, foreign imperialism). In the divide between 'us' and 'them', populist discourse situates the mainstream media as '*them*', part of the elite and, therefore, as disseminating elitist messages (Waisbord, 2013b). Applying Oakeshott's idea of '*politics of faith*' and '*politics of scepticism*', populist leaders present themselves as being able to faithfully address citizens' concerns, while questioning the real intentions behind the news media (Waisbord, 2013b: 150). This leads to a mutually exclusive situation in which populist leaders attempt to reach 'the people' by bypassing any external mediation, while the traditional media attempt to discredit them.

While democratic institutions and processes can appear to obstruct populist leaders from reaching 'the people', the media can also seem an obstacle for them to reach the public. If the news media insist on playing a watchdog role, they will be seen as a threat to the leaders' interests, which are articulated as equivalent to popular and national interests. From a populist perspective, the media can only be considered fair when facilitating direct communication between the leader and the masses. Therefore, I argue that there is an inevitable tension between the news media and populism, since they inevitably engage in a competition for becoming the bearers of popular interests, and ultimately of the truth.

There is the widespread idea that '*populist ideology reduces democracy to its core: the principle of the sovereignty of the people*', denying further mediation channels, checks and balances (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007: 337). However, I consider that this assumption lacks rigour, since populist leaders allow a certain degree of mediation between them and 'the people' under exceptional circumstances: only the leader, and the true representatives of 'the people' –the leaders' friends–

are capable of truthfully mediating the will of ‘the people’. Therefore, populist discourse only legitimises certain mediating channels.

In order to solve the inherent rivalry between media and populism, a rupture with the past and a redemption can be exercised in order to transform the media’s role from foes to friends. However, the confluence between populism and media requires certain conditions: traditional media systems need to be reformed in order to allow the news media to become faithful mediators of populist messages and an appendage of populist leaders’ communication strategies. In this context, capitalist models of advertising, private property and market-driven values are not exterminated, but reorganised (Waisbord, 2013b). Therefore, in an ideal populist media model, the media are transformed into a democratising force, integrating new voices and deepening popular sovereignty. This is what Waisbord (2013a) calls ‘*media activism*’, which in Latin America has concentrated media decisions in the executive, used media laws to constrain free speech, coerce the judiciary and limit the freedom of critical citizen journalism. In the following lines, I discuss the way in which different leaders have used ‘media activism’ for advancing a populist discourse based on the unity of ‘the people’ against a political and media elite.

2.5.1 - From Populist Discourse to Populism as a Communicational Strategy

In this thesis, I conceptualise populism as a discursive articulation of ‘the people’, which remains united in the face of an external enemy. While this study focuses on a discursive approach to populism, it sees populism as a discourse based on a Manichaeian worldview that can have an impact on political communication, media policies, and media structures. Most research on media and populism in Latin America focuses precisely on the way in which certain leaders have used a populist discourse as a means to justify changes in political communication, in media laws, and in the relationship between the leadership and the media.

The news media play a prominent role in the discursive construction, mediation and representation of political life. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that representation and mediation have become two key concepts in populist debates about the mass media. Populist leaders often consider themselves, and ‘the people’ they represent, as victims of distortions by the elite media (Lugo-Ocando and García Santamaría, 2015). Therefore, they propel violent accusations against news media and journalists. However, Weyland (2010) considers neo-populist leaders’ verbal aggressiveness as part of their political communication strategy, in order to make their message heard in a 21st century dominated by mass media, large electorates and powerful international

institutions. In the following lines, I examine the relationship between populism and the news media through some case studies in Argentina, Perú, Brazil, and Ecuador.

Latin American media outlets have traditionally been owned and controlled by the elite, disseminating pro-*status quo* claims and discrediting populist attempts of discursive rupture. The case of Peronism in Argentina is an interesting example for understanding the threat that populist leaders have posed to the hegemonic media system in the region. Panella's work (2006a) analyses the editorial rejection of Argentinian newspaper *La Prensa* towards Peronism after 1955. *La Prensa* was expropriated in April 1951 by former president Juan Perón, who accused the newspaper of representing a corrupt national elite and having links to foreign capital. Therefore, *La Prensa* was framed as an enemy of 'the people'.²⁸ *La Prensa* exemplifies the reaction of the elite media towards totalitarian, populist regimes, going in some cases as far as to support military coups. It is also a reflection of the elites' use of populist discourse all the while criticising a populist regime:

Either the country took down the oppressive regime –Peronism–, or the whole moral, social and economic structure would have collapsed and the consequent chaos would have taken the country back to its position a hundred years ago, at the origins of its organisation, after the memorable battle of Caseros. (in Panella, 2006b: 17)

For instance, populist leaders have made visible debates that were previously considered taboo, such as popular fear towards immigration in Europe, or the need to diversify old hegemonic media systems that hardly fit any media democracy referents in Latin America (Waisbord, 2013b). The main problem is that populist leaders have not completely broken with the unbalanced model that they have traditionally criticised (Lugo-Ocando and García Santamaría, 2015). This has been the case in Argentina. After the return of Peron to power in 1972, *La Prensa* expressed disdain in an editorial for popular sovereignty, explaining that citizens were manipulated by Peron's monopoly of the mass media, producing an '*awakening of the fetishist somnolence of the least evolved masses*' (in Panella, 2006b: 80). However, the paper changed its discourse towards Menem when the Peronist candidate announced his support for national reconciliation, privatisation, and market flexibility; a reduction of the role of the State or a rapprochement to the United States. For instance, the paper reproduced an editorial from *The New York Times* presenting Menem as a leader that '*promises a Peronism without demagoguery, without ruinous state companies and respectful to democratic rules*' (Panella, 2006c: 164).

²⁸ Handed over to the Argentinian General Confederation of Labour (CGT), it would later be returned to its original owners in late 1955, after the military coup against Perón.

Panella's body of work is relevant from a historical perspective because it reveals the evolution of media discourses on populism throughout the 20th century. However, the book only focuses on one case study.

Another case of discursive confrontation between the elite media and a populist leader has been Ecuador. Former president Rafael Correa has used public and supportive media outlets to reinforce the unity between his party and 'the people', who appear united in the fight against the elitism and the racism of the mainstream private media. According to Correa, the press represents the interests of the bourgeoisie and is '*mediocre, incompetent, inaccurate, liar, part of corruption networks and accomplices of national disaster*' (Conaghan and de la Torre, 2008: 278). Therefore, the leader has used a range of disqualifications against 'enemy' media outlets and journalists working for them, which have been labelled as a '*herd of savage beasts*', an '*informative mafia*', '*idiots who publish trash*', '*status quo watchdogs*', '*human wretchedness*' or '*new opium*', among others (Conaghan and de la Torre, 2008: 278).

The cases of Argentina and Ecuador exemplify the mutual antagonism between the elite media and populist leaders in Latin America. However, there can also be a confluence between populism and the mass media. In the following lines, I will examine some examples in which populist leaders have used the media in order to enhance their own political interests. In the Latin American context, Boas (2005) has examined the role of television in the electoral success of three neo-populist leaders in Latin America: Fernando Collor de Mello (1989, Brazil), Alberto Fujimori (2000, Peru) and Alejandro Toledo (2001, Peru). The underlying logic of the study was the assumption that neo-populist leaders prefer to mobilise the unorganised popular classes 'directly' through television (Bouvet, 2012), instead of using traditional channels of mass mobilisation. Therefore, Boas (2005) wondered whether Latin American populist candidates were successful due to their mastery of the media, or due to biased media coverage in their favour.

Several scholars have pointed out the impact of television in conveying populist leaders' charisma and advancing the cause of populist politics (Weyland, 2001; Waisbord, 2003). One format that has contributed to the ascension of populism has been the telenovela, which has often depicted a cynical view of politics as usual, '*a country languishing in corruption and despair, awaiting the dashing hero, a political "outsider" who would restore morality and banish the selfish politicians who had blighted the lives of an honest citizenry*' (Skidmore, 1993). However, Straubhaar, Olsen and Cavaliari Nunes (1993) have called the effects of television in citizens' political choices into question during the government of Brazilian leaders Collor de Mello and Lula d Silva, stressing other sources of political information and factors –such as the support of grassroots movements–

as possible drivers of political success. Lins da Silva (1993) supports this view. The scholar argues that Collor de Mello won the 1990 elections not only for his 'telegenia', but thanks to his role of a political outsider and a message that suited what most people were willing to hear: '*In the end, however, the decisive factor in elections is the identification between voter and candidate*' (Lins da Silva, 1993: 144).

According to Conniff (1999b), the transition from traditional clientelist networks to mass suffrage in Brazil brought with it a change in political communication. Starting in the 1950s, political leaders started using campaign techniques based the mass media, polling, public relations, and the new means of transportation. Pedro Ernesto Baptista, elected mayor of Rio de Janeiro in 1931, is considered one of Brazil's first populist leaders. Baptista became an active player in the mass media. For instance, he owned a city-based radio station and his party founded a newspaper with the aim of publicising his programme. The second wave of populism in Latin America that started in the 1990s saw another populist leader in Brazil, Collor de Mello, who achieved great prominence thanks to his '*flamboyant*' use of the media despite being a political outsider. Thanks to his neoliberal policies, Conniff considers that the leader benefited from generous donations from the economic elites, who supported his programme and who funded part of his media campaigns: '*With brilliant use of slogans, sound bites, photo sessions, television debates, and press briefings, Collor convinced Brazilians that he was an effective leader*' (Conniff, 1999b: 59).

Conniff's work indicates that classic populist leaders have learnt how to use the mass media for the dissemination of their political programme, mastering political communication, engaging in clientelistic relationships with certain media outlets in exchange for positive coverage, or even creating their own. However, the use of the mass media for disseminating populist discourses intensified towards the end of the 20th century with the confluence of modern political communication campaigns and mass media communication strategies. That might explain why most scholarly work has been conducted after the confluence of populism and the mediatisation of politics, often overlooking the fact that populist leaders have always used the media to support their political cause.

The Brazilian case exemplifies a paradigm of presidential communication in Latin America that has been consolidating throughout the 20th century, fostering what some scholars call '*permanent campaigning*' (de la Torre, 2008) '*media activism*', '*media presidencies*' or '*tele-presidencies*' (Waisbord, 2013b: 121). This type of political communication is characterised by the combination of modern political communication and mass communications strategies. In the following lines, I will present some of the communicational strategies that have been used by

Latin American leaders in order to effectively disseminate a populist discourse that brings ‘the people’ and the leaders together in a crusade against an internal elite and an external enemy.

Conaghan and de la Torre (2008) have examined politicians’ use of ‘*permanent political campaigning*’ during the wave of ‘*radical populism*’ that spread through Latin America at the turn of the century. For instance, Ecuador’s president Rafael Correa has used the media in order to publicise his political victories, and most notably the achievements that demonstrate the leaders’ commitment to ‘the people’, that is, to previously marginalised groups (Conaghan and de la Torre, 2008: 275). According to the authors, Correa realised that his victory would not only depend on winning the heart of ‘the people’, but also the will of the public.

Radio and television broadcasts have become a convenient support mechanism for bringing leaders and citizens closer together, circumventing journalistic mediation. Using a weekly broadcast space allows the leaders to have an apparently ‘unmediated’ dialogue with citizens, and these spaces have become popular in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Presidential radio shows have become public spaces for disseminating populist discourse; they serve to highlight the government’s closeness to ‘the people’, to criticise opponents, and to set the media agenda. For instance, inspired by Hugo Chávez’s famous ‘*Aló Presidente*’, Rafael Correa hosted the show ‘*Enlace Ciudadano*’ (‘Citizen Link’) from 2007 to 2017.²⁹ Correa’s show was broadcast every Saturday on national radio and television stations and became a useful tool to launch ‘*a verbal/psychological war*’ on political opponents –whether political parties and leaders, the business elite, or the mainstream media– (Ayala Marín and Cruz, 2010). Since June 2009, the programme included a space called ‘*Freedom of Speech Now Belongs to Everyone*’, stressing the commitment of the government to defining citizens’ rights (Ayala Marín and Cruz, 2010: 8); the same rights that were ignored by ‘the enemy’, embodied by the Ecuadorian elite media.

In addition to radio and television shows, many Latin American leaders have used televised ‘*cadenas*’, that is, ‘*free air time for national public service broadcasts*’ that needs to be granted to the government for communicating topics of national interest (Conaghan and de la Torre, 2008: 276). While intended for emergency situations, *cadenas* have been used as a political tool (Segura

²⁹ ‘*Aló Presidente*’ (‘Hello President’) was a weekly television show that was broadcast live on Venezuelan television and radio from 1999 to 2012. The show was hosted by Hugo Chávez, former president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who addressed the audience in an informal setting. However, the show became the scene for occasional formal political announcements, which were officially announced live. Nicolás Maduro continued Chávez’s tradition, experimenting with different shows until he established the weekly space ‘*Contacto con Maduro*’ (‘In touch with Maduro’) in 2014, which has since been changed to ‘*Los Domingos de Maduro*’ (‘Maduro’s Sundays’) in January 2017.

and Waisbord, 2016). Other populist communication strategies have been the use of paid advertising time or space, often granted to '*friendly*' media outlets in exchange of support.

In summary, the relationship between populist leaders and the media in Latin America has followed three main trends: mutual antagonism, media ownership, and media visibility (Bos, van der Brug and de Vreese, 2011: 183). In the following lines, I will discuss another phenomenon that has shaped the mass media in Latin America during the populist wave that took power at the turn of the century: the creation of new media policies aimed at changing the power relations between the traditional media elite, citizens, and the new governments. I will focus on the cases of Argentina, Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador.

2.5.2 - From Populist Discourse to Populist Media Systems

Populism has become so popular in modern politics because its basic argument is right: representative democracies do not wish to eliminate the existing gap between the government and 'the people' (Canovan, 2005). Similarly, I argue that populist debates on the mass media are equally right. Democratic societies have failed to include the participation of a variety of voices within unequal media systems, in which certain voices have more chances of being heard (Waisbord, 2013b: 1). However, whereas populist leaders present these limitations as a media conspiracy, I agree with Waisbord that different factors are interrelated in this lack of representation, such as market-driven decisions, preference for elite voices, official censorship, dependence on advertisers, and social disinterest in hearing dissonant voices or the tendency to perpetuate certain myths.

I argue that the relationship of populism and the mass media depends on how populism is conceptualised, and in which media system it operates. It is not the same to compare the relationship of Fujimori's government to the Peruvian media, with the relationship between Le Front National and the French media. The relationship of populism to the mass media is context-specific and depends on the balance of powers between political actors, the media industry and civil society. Therefore, the degree of integration of the media within a political system and its relationship to the political elites will influence the media's interaction with populism. Throughout the world, different models of media democracy consider different ideals of balance between state, civil society and the market. For example, whereas the Anglo-American model places the market in a central role, populist media models in Latin America tend to put more

weight on the role of the state and distrust both market-based and civil society models (Waisbord, 2003: 3, 4).

This thesis argues that the populist phenomena is essential to understanding political communication in contemporary Latin America; that is, to assess the relationship between media, political power and democracy. Neo-populist leaders have come to power in a different media climate than their classic counterparts. In this disparate environment, pressure groups, political parties and populist movements are influenced by ‘*media factors*’ to a greater extent, whereas citizens rely more on the mass media to receive political information (Blumler, 2003; Waisbord, 2003; Rojas Huerta et al., 2009). In this context, the news media seem to provide neo-populist leaders with the ideal stage for diffusing the nation’s problems and their reconstruction initiatives, with the condition of reorganising themselves around populist standards (Rojas Huerta et al., 2009: 142).

The last few decades have seen the emergence of public debates regarding media systems and their role in the democratisation of Latin America. The emergence of debates around ‘the media’ aligns with a combination of the mediatisation of politics and the return of populism to Latin America. The mediatisation of politics means that the mass media have taken the place of traditional institutions –such as unions or parties– in the mobilisation of public opinion, thereby becoming a central player in Latin America’s political arena. The importance for populist leaders to harness the media can be seen in this following excerpt:

“The media” became subject of official politics, industrial strategies, juridical decisions, political discourses, electoral campaigns, legislative discussions, citizens’ mobilisation and journalistic opinions. (Waisbord, 2013b: 2)

One of the main debates is the irremediable popularisation of politics in a context of mediatised and marketised politics. According to Manin (1997), the 1970s saw a transition from an ideological party-based democracy to an audience democracy based on voter’s quasi-personal links to specific candidates. In consequence, the new context of audience democracy represents a different type of political representation that favours strong leaders with populist qualities, a good command of media communication techniques and who are able to transform themselves into media personalities: ‘*What we are witnessing today is nothing more than the rise of a new elite and the decline of another*’ (Manin, 1997: 232).

Manin (1997) considers that political representation is conditioned by the exigencies of the mass media, and especially television, which favours the personalisation of politics and the

preponderance of a candidates' image. He states that the advent of 'telepopulist leaders' in the 1980s and 1990s is particularly worrying in '*weak delegative democracies, with a hyper-personalised executive power in which supreme leaders have been selected for their media qualities of auto-presentation*' (Taguieff, 2007: 279). Therefore, the popularisation of populism is a symptom of weak democracies in which the political life is spectacularised in the mass media, which expand populist discourses beyond traditional populist parties (Dorna, 2005: 2-3; Taguieff, 2007: 288-9).

In the case of Latin America, the emergence of a new wave of populist governments has drawn attention to public debates around the role of the media in promoting good governance and democratic procedures (Lugo-Ocando and García Santamaría, 2015). In 21st-century Latin America, '*contemporary populism pursues its obsession with the mediatisation of politics and the politisation of the media*' (Waisbord, 2013b: 3). The increasing relevance of the media has reflected the weakening of traditional democratic institutions, which has forced politicians to consider the news media as an extension of their presidential power (Waisbord, 2013b; Lugo-Ocando and García Santamaría, 2015). At the same time, presidents and high-ranking officials have taken crucial decisions for the development of the media industries, offering credit from public banks, increasing or reducing their taxes, giving official advertisements, facilitating broadcasting licenses, and maintaining laws that allow for the creation of media conglomerates.

What distinguishes populist media policies in Latin America from social-democratic ones seems to be their will to refund media systems through structural reforms, changing the balance between market, state and civil society actors. In the populist mind-set, the refoundation of the mass media is seen to be a previous and necessary step to the refoundation of politics. However, Waisbord (2013b) considers that populist governments have not lived up to these aspirations, instead targeting practicalities rather than the structure of the media system itself. While the main policy of populist governments is the organisation of the media system around the executive power, and the division of media outlets according to their position towards the government, old problems such as media patrimonialism and clientelism are not challenged. Since patrimonialism and clientelism promote the interests of only a fraction of society, they prevent the news media from accomplishing their duty of serving the public interest.

María Soledad Segura and Silvio Waisbord (2016) have explored 21st-century media policies in several Latin American countries. Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela have approved new Constitutions in recent years that aim at reorganising their media systems, making them more plural and inclusive. For instance, the Argentinian 2009 law, which aimed at increasing the social

responsibility of the media, has become a regional model for the reorganisation and democratisation of media systems. The law was the result of a broad consensus between civil society actors, such as human rights organisations, communitarian media and press associations, and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's government (Segura and Waisbord, 2016). However, the main problem has been the implementation of new media laws that could *a priori* solve some of the main communicational problems of the region, such as media patrimonialism, media concentration, or the lack of accountability. For instance, the Kirchner administration sparked one of the most notable conflicts between the state and the press when it accused the newspaper, *Clarín* of buying the paper's supplier, *Papel Prensa* thanks to past collaboration with the 1976 military dictatorship (Repoll, 2010). Some critical voices, though, saw the government accusations as a means for nationalising the commercialisation and distribution of paper.³⁰

The main problem seems to be that the populist defence of citizens' informational and communicational rights is not based on the purpose of reinforcing the public sphere, but on strengthening the state's own sphere of influence. For instance, in Bolivia, the 2011 law of Telecommunications, Technologies of Information and Communication decided that media licenses would be distributed equally between the private sector, the state and social movements (including indigenous communities). However, critical voices argue that these social movements depend on public funding and, therefore, journalists could seek protection through self-censorship, which would then indirectly strengthen the power of the state media (Waisbord, 2013b; Lugo-Ocando and García Santamaría, 2015). The indirect promotion of self-censorship has adopted multiple shapes, sometimes under laws that promote the 'veracity' and 'public service' of the information. For instance, a Venezuelan law against media crimes forbids information that encourages hate, increases citizen's anxiety, disrespects the government or could be used for fostering a propaganda war. Similarly, Ecuador's law considers that all published information should be '*truthful, verified, timely and contextualised*' (Waisbord, 2013b: 37-8), making it riskier for journalists to criticise the government, or government officials.

What would happen if populist media policies were actually more pragmatic than ideological, after all? The debates surrounding media policies highlight the lack of ideological clarity on populism. In the context of media laws, it represents a certain conception of presidentialism and

³⁰ In Argentina, the government of Mauricio Macri issued an executive order in 2015 that modified the media law approved by the government of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2015). With this order, the government claimed to end 'a war' in which the Kirchner administration used the mass media a political tool (Smink, 2015).

statism but not necessarily the triumph of public media models –if considered as offering common spaces for public debate around dialogue, education and diversity.

In populist media systems, ‘the public’ follows the trend of ‘the people’ and can also operate as an empty signifier (in Laclauian terms) ready to be filled with meaning by demagogic leaders, whether by dictators or democrats. For instance, Chavez’s government has used ‘the public’ and ‘the popular’ as synonyms, attempting to fix the meaning of these concepts directly from the presidency (Sibrian, 2013). The state-owned media have become platforms for disseminating official frames, whether real or imaginary, influencing popular perceptions, and criticising the opposition. It is no surprise that they have been called a simple ‘*extension of presidential communication*’ (Waisbord, 2013b: 60).

The relationship between media, populism and democracy is far from clear and reinforces the conceptual confusion that surrounds all debates on populism. Populism has usually been incompatible with concepts such as participatory debate, pluralism, tolerance for voices of dissent or compromise between different opinions (Mazzoleni, 2004; Alvares and Dahlgren, 2016). Whereas populist leaders are accused of promoting censorship, they turn this frame upside down: for them, it is the private media who threatens freedom of speech and fails to represent popular interests. From their point of view, they have increased the visibility of excluded voices and debates; have narrowed the gap between politics and the real concerns of ‘the people’; have called the hegemonic ownership and control of the media into question, and have ensured a balanced and truthful flow of information. However, for populist opponents, all these claims are just a way of hiding a centralisation and personalisation of politics, restrictions to press freedom and the substitution of traditional media clientelism by a populist mode of media patronage.

This thesis argues that debates surrounding media and populism should focus on the media’s independence from political and economic structures of power, rather than on media ownership. If public media in Latin America is condemned for its closeness with the official line, could not the private media linked to oppositional forces be condemned for its bias, as well? This is the truth that remains hidden both from populist and anti-populist discourses. While populist discourses put the blame on the private oligarchical media, populist opponents promise a media redemption through the market. However, previous experiences in new Asian and Eastern European democracies suggest that market reform does not necessarily ensure political independence, or enhance the role of the media in the promotion of good governance (Štětka, 2015; Thompson, 2015).

2.5.3 - The Media, ‘the People’ and the Cuban Experience

Populist appeals to ‘the people’, as defined by Canovan (1999), challenge the dominant ideas and values of society and go against the structure of power that supports them. In Latin America, populism has often become anti-bourgeois, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist, combining both right and left-wing characteristics (Germani, 1978: 88, 89). However, we know very little about the way in which this takes place in countries in which populist discourse has become institutionalised. The Cuban case offers a unique opportunity for examining how the enemy of populism can be constructed as a foreign imperialist and capitalist elite, but also as an internal establishment that resists change.

In this section, I explore the (dis)connections between left-wing populist governments, civil society and media policies in Latin America. I argue that the vibrant debate that has taken place in the region since the turn of the century has influenced academic and journalistic debates about the role of the media in society in Cuba. Over the last few years, a wave of left-wing Latin American governments has brought the role of the media into public debate. These debates have given public visibility to long-standing demands for a more inclusive and democratic media system. For the most part, this new Latin American left has threatened the region’s elitist media systems. For instance, governments in Venezuela, Argentina, Ecuador, and Bolivia have issued policies that change the balance of power in media ownership. In some cases, this has translated effectively into the redistribution of broadcasting licences, granting by law a percentage of licences to civil-society organisations and the state.

While media regulation had respectable aims, such as broadening access, diversifying voices and redistributing property, there are those who believe that recent media debates were monopolised by the executive branch of the governments, who dismissed any opportunity for coalition-seeking or public scrutiny (Conaghan, C. and de la Torre, 2008; Salojärvi, 2016; Márquez-Ramírez and Guerrero, 2017). This was the case in Ecuador, where the subordination of the judiciary to Correa’s executive left civil-society groups, journalists and media owners few channels for exercising their rights (de la Torre and Ortiz Lemos, 2016). Executive-led media reforms in Latin America have not always been widely discussed, and their implementation has often escaped public scrutiny. Giving the media back to ‘the people’ was often interpreted as reorganising top-down structures of power, rather than democratising them. However, a recent body of research has focused on cases in which civil-society groups have been actively involved in the elaboration of media policies. Citizen involvement is seen to have changed power relations in society on its

own, independently of the format of the policies.³¹ The involvement of social movements in policymaking has been analysed by Segura and Waisbord from a comparative perspective (2016). The scholars argue that ‘media movements’, that is, ‘*civic initiatives aimed at transforming media policies to promote pluralism in public communication*’ (Segura and Waisbord, 2016: 3) have played an essential part in the negotiation of new media law in Latin America. While the outcomes can be –and are, in fact– questioned, the scholars argue that ‘media movements’ have improved the channels of communication between the government and the citizenry, fostering accountability and transparency. While results vary from case to case, the involvement of civil-society organisations seems to have improved media pluralism. In a cross-national study, Collins (2014) argues that the existence of previously organised sectors of society has been a key factor in determining the successful involvement of civil-society groups in policy-making. While popular mobilisation preceded the election of Rafael Correa and Evo Morales in Ecuador and Bolivia, citizens were not as organised in the run-up to the election of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. This would explain, according to Collins, the greater influence of civil-society groups in the two first cases.

Some scholars have highlighted the importance of looking at the relationship between media and populism in Latin America. The region has become a ‘*laboratory of media policy reforms*’ during the wave of left-wing populist governments that took power at the turn of the century (Segura and Waisbord, 2016: 1). The involvement of civil-society actors in the discussion and overview of new media policies across the region has been unprecedented. This has generated a great amount of attention in countries in which debates on the social responsibility of the media have not become a matter of public debate. This could be the case of Brazil, Peru, Chile, or even Cuba. Therefore, it is essential to understand media and populism in Latin America from a wider regional scope (Lugo-Ocando and García Santamaría, 2015; Rovira Kaltwasser and Taggart, 2016; Segura and Waisbord, 2016). In the following lines, I will address the importance of understanding the relationship between left-wing populist governments, civil society and the media in Latin America when looking at the Cuban experience.

In this section, I have examined media and populism in Latin America from four points of view. First, I have discussed the way in which a populist worldview can be expressed in the discourse of actual political leaders. Second, I have examined populist leaders’ attempts to appropriate the news media both discursively, and in practice. This has been achieved through strategies aimed at

³¹ For instance, left-wing governments in Bolivia and Venezuela have not only given ownership licences to social movements, but they have also provided journalistic training for those who work in community media (Gómez and Ramos-Martín, 2014).

promoting a people-leader unity through presidential appearances in live shows or the use of ‘*cadenas*’ –nationally broadcast addresses to the audience. However, populist leaders have also attempted to reorganise power structures through a reorganisation of media ownership. While the aforementioned strategies have been conducted in the name of the people I have discussed the contradiction between appeals to ‘the people’ and an effective empowerment of ‘the people’. Finally, I have stressed the importance of those cases in which social movements have participated in the drafting of inclusionary media laws.

The role of the Cuban institutional media in constructing and reproducing a populist discourse is the main focus of this thesis. In chapter one, I have argued that the Cuban media have become a key factor in the discursive construction of populism, a Manichaeian opposition between a united people (‘us’) and their enemies (‘them’). This polarising element is common to populist discourse in Latin America (Hawkins, 2008; Waisbord, 2013b; Lugo-Ocando and García Santamaría, 2015; Salojärvi, 2016; de la Torre and Ortiz Lemos, 2016). In the context of Cuba, Yudaimy Castro Morales (2009) has studied the national and international sections of the national newspaper *Granma* and concluded that there is a big gap in the way in which problems are covered at home and abroad. While Cuban problems receive little or no coverage, she contends, worldwide disasters and crises occupy a prominent role in the media agenda. Therefore, the paper promotes a triumphalist construction of Cuban, and Cuban allies’ achievements, while hyperbolising the problems of the enemies. In the same line, Raúl Garcés (2013) has denounced the media discourse that divides the social world between a ‘foreign hell’, and a mythical ‘domestic paradise’. This discourse has its roots in an early conceptualisation of the media based on a populist worldview. Since the Communist Party of Cuba designed a media model for a country in a permanent state of siege, the media are called on to foster national unity around the Revolution. In this context, criticism can be seen as divisive and, therefore, as weakening internal resistance against a shared –real or perceived– enemy.³² Another shared characteristic of populist discourse in Cuba and other Latin American countries is the appropriation of patriotism and national history. For instance, previous research suggests that Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil have appealed to national heroes as a way of legitimising their own claims (Lugo-Ocando, Guedes and Cañizález, 2011). This discourse was disseminated in the state media, and in media outlets close to the executive branch of the government.

³² The conceptualisation and articulation of the Cuban media is further developed in chapter one.

Drawing on a cross-national analysis, Márquez-Ramírez and Guerrero (2017:43) have found that legal frameworks in Latin America are ‘*insufficient*’ and ‘*helpless*’ in promoting citizens’ informational rights. The gap between theory and practice can be explained by the distance between leaders’ appeals to ‘the people’, and their will to facilitate popular involvement in policymaking. This is where current debates on media and populism in Latin America become more crucial for Cuba. While left-wing governments in the region have fostered public debate about media ownership and the social responsibility of the media, in Cuba these debates are still restricted to intellectual circles. These narrow circles, such as newsrooms, journalists’ congresses and academia, are nevertheless aware of progressive media policies on the continent. After repeated public announcements of upcoming media regulation, the media continue to operate following Party guidelines and recommendations. However, Cuban journalists and academics have been advocating for an ‘updating’ of the Cuban media, and for a media law negotiated with practitioners and experts (García Luis, 2004; González García, 2012; Elizalde, 2013; Somohano, 2013).

Finally, the attempt of populist leaders to reorganise traditionally elitist and exclusionary systems can seem of little relevance to the Cuban case, but it is important to remember that the Communist Party of Cuba nationalised all media outlets in 1965, and that the existence of non-institutional media outlets is restricted –due to a legal vacuum– to the Internet. While the rapid growth of technology has brought with it promises of greater democratisation, new media technologies have proved insufficient to counterbalance old structural problems in Latin America (Márquez-Ramírez and Guerrero, 2014) and beyond (Voltmer, 2013; Zielonka, 2015; Štětka, 2015).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have defined populism as a discursive strategy that builds an antithesis between “us” –the good people–, as opposed to “them” –the enemies– through a series of symbols, themes and images (Laclau, 2005a: 123). Then, I have discussed the relationship between media and populism in Latin America. In a context of weak democratic institutions, different waves of populist leaders have attempted to use the media as means to advance their goals. Overall, I have explored the relationship between media and populism, the challenges ahead and the issues and areas which need further scholarly research. In this context, I have stressed the importance of Latin American experiences with media, populism and citizenship for current debates in Cuban

journalism. These debates, as I will discuss in chapter six, have the potential of shaping media policy in the Island.

Future research needs to address the role of the news media in the ‘*symbolic construction*’ and/or the ‘*symbolic demolition*’ of populism (Mazzoleni, 2004: 9). The analysis of media and populism in the region needs to overcome the excessive focus on certain ideal-type models. Therefore, it needs to foster the study of previously ignored cases such as Cuba, as well as comparative research. Future research should also address the ideological prejudices against populism that can hinder the quality and the depth of academic studies.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The aim of this thesis is to explore the way in which Cuban state-owned newspapers have articulated ‘the people’ in times of national debate. The case study focuses on two periods of crisis and debate that preceded the celebration of the IV (1991) and the VI (2011) congresses of the Communist Party of Cuba. The main argument is that populism, being a pervasive feature in politics (Laclau, 2005; Canovan, 1999; Ardit, 2007), and an essential phenomenon in Latin American politics (Waisbord, 2013a; Lugo-Ocando and García Santamaría, 2015), might have guided the articulation of the Cuban people in times of national crises. However, populist articulations are not taken for granted, but historically contextualised and compared to indices of non-populistic articulations of political difference.

The case study is analysed through a triangulation of qualitative methods of analysis that include a qualitative content analysis and a critical discourse analysis of newspaper articles, as well as qualitative semi-structured interviews with Cuban media actors. This chapter explains the rationale behind the case study. Then, it introduces the theoretical framework that guides this piece of research, a combination of Discourse Theoretical Analysis (DTA) and discourse historical analysis (DHA), which are systematised through a qualitative mixed-methods approach. The chapter will then explain the methodological rationale of the analysis.

3.1 - Case Study

Populism has been widely studied in the Latin American context. However, there has been an academic tendency to study the populist phenomenon in a very specific set of countries (mostly Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela or Ecuador), in which populism has arisen in democratic or semi-democratic contexts and followed the regional waves that I have talked about in the literature review (classical populism from the 1930s to the 1950s, neo-populism in the 1980s and radical populism in the late 20th century or early 21st century). Furthermore, there has been a systematic exclusion of whole areas of Latin America, especially where populism has combined with long-standing socialist or authoritarian regimes, such as in the case of Cuba.

The lack of previous research concerning populism in Cuba represents much more than a geographical gap. In this thesis, I argue that the Cuban case is essential to understanding the roots of the discursive confrontation between ‘the people’ and ‘the enemy’ in Latin America. The 1959

Cuban Revolution has been key to the symbolic construction of people's political possibilities on the continent, even at the cost of challenging the hegemony of traditional elites and US attempts to influence politics. This thesis aims to contribute to the study of populism in the Caribbean context, looking at the construction of 'the Cuban people' both from a comparative-synchronic analysis, and from a historical perspective (May, 1993; Carvalho, 2008).

3.1.1 - Periodisation

According to Carvalho (2008), scholars of critical discourse analysis have often neglected what she calls the '*time plane*' of discourse, that is, the historical nature of discourse. Most research looking at discourse has focused on short time spans, being therefore unable to account for changes in discourse over time. Whereas van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) have explored the historical construction of national identity from a historical discourse analysis perspective, the analysis of media discourse from a systematic historical perspective has been rare. This study adopts what Carvalho (2008: 164) calls a '*time-sensitive*' analysis of discourse in a historical-diachronic manner. This approach has been used by Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser (2013), who have studied political discourse in Latin since the early 20th century.

The study of discourse has a particular relevance in moments of change (Fairclough, 1998), since '*language changes always manifest social changes, but language changes (or changes in language behaviour) can also trigger social changes*' (Wodak, 1989: xv). For instance, Carvalho's study (2008: 166) applies '*critical-discourse moments*' to periods of time that are key in determining the discursive construction of an event or identity, and which challenge previous hegemonic constructions through the consolidation of competing discourses. This thesis will adopt this latter perspective, looking at events as moments of structural 'dislocation' that bring about new 'possibilities' and 'freedom' (Howarth, 2015: 31).

I will define the Communist Party of Cuba calls to debate (1991-1992; 2010-2012) as 'events', understood as moments in which the elements of a structure are dislocated because the existing system is unable to represent them under existing hegemonic chains of meaning. In this sense, dislocation differs from contradiction. Whereas contradiction is intrinsic to the internal development of the structure, dislocation is necessarily external to it (Howarth, 2015: 34). As a consequence, the dislocated structure brings about the possibility of multiple symbolic rearticulations of the elements that had not fit in the previous structure, and which are therefore freed from hegemonic coercion.

The ‘possibilities’ of rearticulation will be contingent, but influenced by previous structures. In Howarth’s words, there is ‘*a widening of the field of the possible, but this takes place in a determinate situation: that is, one in which there is always a relative structuration*’ (Howarth, 2015: 31). Howarth (2015: 32) contends that dislocation also brings about ‘freedom’, not because individuals are condemned to be free, as existentialists would argue, or because they are independent from structures, but because of their ‘*failed structural identity*’. Dislocation is seen as ‘freedom’ because the failure of the structure to fully constitute itself and individual subjectivity leaves subjects freed from previous hegemonic chains, able to influence a rearticulation of symbolic meaning and to integrate their temporary externality into a new – contingent– hegemonic order. Following this thesis, greater dislocation correlates with greater social indetermination, and therefore a freer society.

Critical-discursive moments, or events, are therefore brought about by crises that challenge the hegemonic construction of reality. As previous research shows, populism, as ‘*a way of interpreting the moral basis or legitimacy of a political system*’, is more widespread in periods in which citizens perceive a violation of their rights and of popular sovereignty (Hawkins, 2010: 8). Similarly, Mudde (2004: 547) argues that populism is more manifest in special circumstances of long-standing political resentment, combined with the presence of a charismatic leader able to translate this popular resentment to the political game under one coherent cause. This is the reason why populism is often associated with periods of crises. Therefore, I will focus on ‘*a construction of a chronology of events*’ (Carvalho, 2008: 166), in which the hegemonic constructions of ‘the people’ and ‘the enemy’ are dislocated, and look at the way in which this dislocation is expressed in the content of the media.

Whereas there have been many critical-discursive moments throughout the Cuban Revolution, this analysis will focus on two key periods of national crises and debate. The idea is to look at those events throughout time from the early signs of dislocation, that is, from the beginning of a symbolic crises that threatens the hegemonic construction of reality, until the moment of relocation, that is, when ‘the Revolution’ manages to fix a hegemonic meaning through a different symbolic articulation of signifiers. This thesis has selected two periods.

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and Connolly (2005) draw on the Lacanian idea of an internal lack that might be temporarily disguised by the universalising influence of an empty signifier. However, moments of crises can disrupt existing logics of articulation, as well as naturalised routines. Looking at periods of potential dislocation and national debate allows us to see how hegemonic articulations of meaning are both challenged and rearticulated, either by displacing the frontiers

that dichotomise the social between ‘the people’ and ‘the enemy’, or by rearticulating demands around a counter-hegemonic project.

It is precisely in these situations of structural failure that we see the emergence or radical subjectivity, as subjects are literally compelled to identify with new objects and discourses to fill the lack made visible by a dislocatory event. (Howarth, 2008: 186)

The first period spans from the call to the IV Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba on 18 March 1990, in the midst of a strong symbolic dislocation created by the collapse of the Soviet Union, which brought with it one of the longest periods of popular debate in the history of ‘the Revolution’ (Guanche, 2009; Martínez Heredia, 2010; Kapcia, 2014) to the celebration of the Congress in October 1991, when ‘the Party’ tries to fix a new symbolic articulation. The dislocation arises in this context from the articulation between the Cuban Revolution and Soviet socialism. The second period spans from the call to the VI Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba in November 2010, in a context of dislocation produced by the disappearance of Fidel Castro from public life and the attempts to fill the void left by his charismatic leadership, until the celebration of the I National Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba in January 2012 (González García, 2012; Elizalde, 2013; Kapcia, 2014). The dislocation, in this case, arises from the articulation between ‘the Revolution’ and the leader, Fidel Castro.

Both periods of study share relevant characteristics that make them not only meaningful critical-discursive moments, but also comparable from a historical-diachronic perspective. Both periods take place during simultaneous economic and ideological crises in which the hegemonic strategies of discursive legitimisation of ‘the Revolution’ stumble. The combination of crises (dislocation) and debate (relocation) is of utmost relevance for the research of populist discourse. This combination illustrates not only the way in which citizens are called on to defend ‘the Revolution’ in the face of ‘the enemy’, but also the way in which people are called on to rebuild ‘the Revolution’ in the face of adversity.

The Communist Party of Cuba called on citizens to debate before the IV Congress in the midst of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Cuba’s main political and economic ally at that time, upon which it depended both for ideological justification and economic survival. The Party-led call to debate before the VI Congress took place after Fidel Castro’s resignation in 2008. In this context, ‘the Party’ had to deal with the ideological and communicational vacuum left by the gradual disappearance from public life of the charismatic ‘father’ of the 1959 Revolution. This period also coincided with an economic crisis on the Island that, while not as significant as in the 1990s,

helped to call into question the efficacy of the socialist model of development. It is not a coincidence that both periods of crisis were accompanied by widespread popular debate (Kapcia, 2014; Martínez Heredia, 2010; Guanche, 2009; Elizalde, 2013). Both periods of debate were Party-led, took place within revolutionary mass organisations, and participants were bound by the limits of revolutionary belonging. The explicit goals of the debates were to improve popular legitimacy through citizen participation in political decision-making, and to adapt the hegemonic meaning of ‘the Revolution’ to new circumstances. Nevertheless, the debates mobilised millions of citizens, who were able to discuss the reforms suggested by the leadership, and to express their concerns (Garcés, 2014: 54).

Furthermore, both calls to debate took place in moments of relative ideological openness, amid official and journalistic campaigns that encouraged the media to cover social reality from a critical standpoint. The IV Congress was preceded by the so-called period of ‘Rectification of Mistakes and Negative Tendencies’ that Fidel Castro announced in 1985, which media workers and scholars saw as the right context for a renewal and professionalisation of journalism. This conviction was expressed in the 1986 Congress of the Union of Cuban Journalists (Marrero, 2013). The second period came after Raúl Castro’s repeated calls for open debate since he came into power in 2006, as well as the expansion of independent media actors and blogs, which contributed to the erosion of the communicational hegemony of ‘the Party’ (Díaz Rodríguez and Firuzeh Sokoo, 2013; Elizalde, 2013; Rubira and Gil-Egui, 2013). Therefore, in the context of official and professional demands for openness and debate, it can be expected that Cuban newspapers will offer a relatively comprehensive, critical and nuanced coverage of the crises and of popular debates or, at least, show a combination of both old and renewed discourses.

3.1.2 - Newspaper and Interviewee Selection

In this thesis, I combine a longitudinal study of populist discourse with a comparative-synchronic analysis of the main national daily newspaper in Cuba, *Granma*, which is the official organ of the Communist Party of Cuba. The newspaper was founded in 1965 after the reorganisation of media industries and the adoption of Soviet-like structures of media organisation (see chapter one for more details). *Granma* represents the official voice of the Communist Party of Cuba and functions in practice as an official gazette (Pérez González, 2012; García Luis, 2013; Somohano, 2013).³³ For instance, measures announced by the government are not official until they are

³³ There is another national daily, *Juventud Rebelde*, which was also founded in 1965 and is institutionally linked to the Young Communist League (UJC). This paper has a differentiated identity, since it is aimed at a younger readership and

published in *Granma*. Due to its closeness to ‘the Party’, *Granma* has a limited ability to set the news agenda. The paper needs to follow the ‘informational policies’ (*política informativa*) and periodical guidelines provided by the ‘Ideological Department of the Central Committee of the Party’ (*Departamento Ideológico del Comité Central del Partido*) (González García, 2014). However, the editor-in-chief enjoys certain freedom in interpreting Party guidelines, and in shaping the news agenda.³⁴

Since the paper operates as a close mediator between the voice of the Party and the audience, it is an essential source of information for examining the voice of ‘the Party’ during the periods of debate that took place from 1990 to 1991, and from 2010 to 2012. However, the relative autonomy of the paper in interpreting the ‘informational policies’ means that the voice of the journalist is also present in the paper. This is particularly important, since it allows us to identify the journalists’ positions within the official discourse of ‘the Party’. The voice and the subjective position of Cuban journalists is further explored through 25 semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews are valuable tools for observing the transformations that people undergo when adopting new roles as a result of new experiences (May, 1993: 123), such as the socio-economic, political and technological changes that developed in Cuba over the last decade. This is even more important since both case studies took place amidst party calls to relax media control, and to foster a media-led debate about new transformations –the ‘Special Period’ in the 1990s, and the ‘Updating of the Economic Model’ after 2010. The goal of conducting interviews was to understand why, despite receiving official endorsement, *Granma* continued to reproduce the official discourse in the coverage of Party-led debates. By conducting interviews, I wanted to understand the way which journalists’ normative ideals, professional routines and external pressures influenced *Granma*’s construction of ‘the people’ in contexts of crisis and change.

is not the official voice of the Party. While it could have been interesting to include *Juventud Rebelde* in the analysis of less political topics, the media coverage of Party congresses is tightly monitored by the Ideological Department of the Central Committee (see chapter six for more details). The informational policies are strictly regulated, including wording, range of accessible sources, and the message that is to be prioritised. I conducted a preliminary analysis of *Juventud Rebelde* and I encountered two problems. First, the newspaper became a weekly publication during the paper shortage in the 1990s, and therefore the National Library José Martí only holds a sparse collection of editions, many of which are often damaged. Second, a preliminary analysis indicated a high degree of overlap between the headlines, range of sources, and discourses. Therefore, the analysis of the debates that led to the IV and the VI Party Congresses would have produced repetitive, rather than differentiated discourses. However, journalists working at this newspaper during both periods of analysis have been incorporated into the interviews. This enables the analysis of any differences that journalists working for both national dailies could identify.

³⁴ The Political Bureau of the ‘Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party’ issued, in 2007, some guidelines for improving the informational efficacy of the mass media. In the document, the editor-in-chief of a publication is granted the power to ultimately interpret the ‘informational policies’, and to decide what can be published (Somohano, 2013).

The interviews aimed at understanding three elements: (1) journalists' articulation of their professional values, (2) journalists' subjective position in relation to the official discourse of 'the Party', as mediated by *Granma*, and (3) the possible contradiction between their professional and their revolutionary identity. This is essential for understanding the role of journalists in relocating symbolic meaning –whether reinforcing, questioning, or challenging the hegemonic discourse. Therefore, the interviews provide relevant information about the interplay between journalists' normative values, their revolutionary and professional identity, and their sense of agency.

During the first two weeks of my stay in Havana, I reviewed a body of unpublished research at the Faculty of Communication and came up with a theoretical sample of interviewees. The fact that certain journalists and scholars were repeatedly interviewed in students' dissertations was, for me, a sign of their relevance, and of their commitment to research. As I progressed with the interviews, I started introducing a snowball sampling technique. The combination of both sampling strategies was useful for identifying interviewees that were both knowledgeable and willing to speak with their own voice, going beyond Party slogans. The interviews were conducted in two phases. For access reasons, I started interviewing Cuban academics first, and then I widened the scope to journalists working for the institutional media. After a preliminary analysis, I realised that these two categories –academics and journalists– often overlapped with a third one: those working at the margins of the institutional media. This category included bloggers and journalists who worked in independent digital media projects. The category of academics, journalists and bloggers often overlaps in Cuba –some academics work as journalists and write a blog in their free time, and some bloggers are trained journalists who have worked at the Faculty of Communication, or for the institutional media. Therefore, I decided to interview some bloggers and academics that mainly identified as bloggers.³⁵ I have respected the interviewees' main professional identity, which is the one that I use to identify them in the thesis. I argue that the partial overlapping of these three groups constitutes an advantage, since all the interviewees share a common background, but have also experienced different levels of attachment to the institutional media. This different degree of professional and institutional involvement could, therefore, reveal distinctive subjective positions within the hegemonic discourse.

All the interviewees were leading practitioners and scholars from different generations, ranging from their mid-twenties to their early seventies, and were working –at least in their view– within

³⁵ The interviews were conducted from June 2014 to October 2015, at a time in which non-institutional media projects were still incipient. While some of the interviewees were bloggers at the time of the interviews, most of them were trained journalists and eventually moved on to work for non-institutional digital media projects –or to create their own. Given this context, and for practical reasons, I will refer to these bloggers as journalists.

the limits of belonging that were set by Fidel Castro's 'Words to the Intellectuals': '*Inside the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing*' (Castro Ruz, 1961). The goal was to understand the professional routines and the personal view of journalists who were familiar with the institutional media, and who worked within the boundaries of revolutionary belonging. From the outset, I saw the interviewees not only as faithful revolutionaries, but also as critical actors with professional values who actively debate about, and reflect upon, their role as journalists. All the interviews were conducted between June 2014 and July 2015. One interview took place by email at the request of the interviewee, and the other 24 interviews were conducted face-to-face. Two interviews were conducted in Matanzas, and 23 in Havana. The interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and uploaded to the software package Atlas.ti (QCA). The qualitative analysis of the interviews was done in three phases, simultaneously with the analysis of *Granma*, and will be further developed in the section below (Coffey and Atkinson, 2004; Schreier, 2012). Following the ethical guidelines of *University of Sheffield*, all the interviewees were handed a summary of the project and a consent form, and agreed to take part in the project. Having obtained their consent, their institutional affiliation is disclosed in Annex IV.

3.2 - Analytical Framework

This thesis builds on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's (1985) post-Marxist and poststructuralist Discourse Theory. In developing this theoretical framework, I adopt a range of analytical categories, such as nodal points, equivalential chains, and hegemonic articulations that have been discussed in the Literature Review. I approach Discourse Theory from a qualitative mixed-methods approach, and systematise it through two strands of critical discourse analysis: discourse theoretical analysis (DTA) (Carpentier and De Cleen, 2007) and a discourse historical approach (DHA) (de Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak, 1999).³⁶

In the Literature Review, I explain that this thesis adopts a Laclaunian approach to populism, defined as a hegemonic project that successfully articulates chains of discursive equivalence between different popular demands. In a hegemonic project, the leadership is temporarily able to represent popular demands by unifying them. However, unification always requires the creation of a logic of exclusion from the political project, dividing society between those who belong, and the others. Both Laclau (2005a) and de Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak (1999) work with the interplay

³⁶ For practical reasons, this thesis will use the term Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) when referring to the combination of Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) and Discourse Theoretical Analysis (DTA).

of two logics of discourse, the logic of aggregation ('equivalence' for the first, and 'assimilation' for the latter), and the logic of disaggregation ('difference' for Laclau, and 'dissimilation' for de Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak), which complement themselves. Therefore, this thesis contends that Laclau's conceptualisation of populism is compatible with a discourse historical approach. This approach allows researchers to trace the discursive elements that have historically been used to unify national identity, '*to construct national sameness and uniqueness*', as well as contextual factors that might challenge existing articulations (de Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak, 1999: 149).

3.2.1 - Discourse Theoretical Analysis (DTA)

This thesis argues that Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's work (1985) on discourse and hegemony (what they call Discourse Theory) can be useful for understanding the power relations embedded in media discourses. The following lines will discuss the challenges that adopting this analytical framework pose for the field of media studies. On the one hand, most poststructuralist studies on discourse suffer a methodological deficit. According to Zienkowski (2014: 284), Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory takes an ontological approach to discourse. This means that they see methodological guidelines as well beyond their theoretical concerns, and as even overly positivist for their ontological view (Zienkowski, 2014: 284). Therefore, Discourse Theory has been criticised for a lack of methodological guidelines, which hinders the application of Laclau and Mouffe's analytical concepts for empirical case studies (Torfig, 1999; Carpentier and De Cleen, 2007; Howarth, 2008). For instance, Dahlberg (2011) contends that the work of Laclau and Mouffe is more philosophical than theoretical, and that it is necessary to find a way of combining philosophy, theory, and methodology.

On the other hand, some scholars argue that Discourse Theory neglects the structural (cultural, political, institutional, material, procedural conditions) and emotional dimensions that enable the disarticulation and rearticulation of hegemonic logics, as well as the role of subject awareness and self-reflection (Howarth, 2008: 189; Simons, 2011: 202; Wodak, 2011: 625). Therefore, Simons (2011: 213) calls for the need of further understanding the conditions under which a populist logic might become hegemonic, maintained, and disarticulated, as well as the means through which these conditions manifest themselves in practice.

In order to solve these shortcomings, Nico Carpentier and Benjamin de Cleen (2007) have attempted to systematise Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory (DT) while taking a close look at both linguistic and contextual elements of the text. According to this framework, Discourse Theory provides a range of sensitising concepts that suggest '*what to look for, and where to look*'

(Ritzer, 1992: 365). These concepts are then explored through a combination of qualitative methods of analysis.

Discourse Theoretical Analysis has been applied to some case studies over the last few years (Methmann, 2010; Carpentier and Van Brussel, 2012; Von Groddeck and Schwarz, 2013), often in combination with other strands of discourse analysis. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe define discourse as a practice that constructs the social (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). This definition is therefore coherent with a discourse analysis perspective, which conceives discourse as social practice that is influenced by and influencing social relations. For instance, van Dijk (1997: 3) defines discourse analysis as a systematic analysis of ‘*talk and text in context*’, of discourses that acquire a specific meaning within a particular context of production and decoding. Discourses can be expressed through linguistic and extra-linguistic forms, such as power relations in the social production and reception of a discourse. However, discourse analysis has often been criticised for being either too linguistic, and therefore contextually blind, or too contextual, and therefore too detached from the linguistic elements of the text.

While some approaches to discourse analysis have a micro-textual focus, conducting a close linguistic analysis, others go beyond language and focus on the embedded ideologies that a text contains. This is the greatest difference between CDA and DTA:

DTA and CDA are positioned differently on the macro-contextual / micro-contextual and the macro-textual / micro-textual axes that structure the field of discourse studies. (Carpentier and de Cleen, 2007: 276)

DTA combines CDA with qualitative content analysis, which allows the researcher to keep in constant touch with the text without overlooking contextual factors. This provides an in-depth look at ‘*the complex relationships between representations, practices and identities, and the way they contribute to the generation of (old and news) meanings*’ (Carpentier and de Cleen, 2007: 278). However, the result is still a macro-approach that remains considerably detached from linguistic elements themselves. Similarly, despite de Cleen and Carpentier’s efforts to systematise DT, most studies do not seem to overcome the initial problem, offering rather diffuse methodological guidelines.

3.2.2 - Discourse Historical Approach (DHA)

The reproduction of methodological deficits when attempting to systematise Discourse Theory has led Dahlberg (2011) to assert that it needs to be used in conjunction with other methods.

Therefore, this thesis will combine discourse theoretical analysis (Carpentier and de Cleen, 2007) with a discourse historical approach (de Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak, 1999). The discourse historical approach focuses on the way in which texts ‘*relate to structured knowledge (discourses)*’ (Stoegner and Wodak, 2016: 196). Wodak (2011) argues that texts are analysed in relation to extra-linguistic social structures that can be embedded in the text (voices, sources, discourses...), or that evolve throughout time. In her own words,

The DHA enables the systematic, explicit and transparent (thus retroductable) analysis of the historical (i.e. intertextual) dimension of discursive practices by exploring the ways in which particular genres of discourse are subject to change over time, and also by integrating social theories to explain context. (Wodak, 2011: 628)

In this definition, ‘history’ can refer to the way in which language changes over short periods of time, such as the evolution of a topic in the media, or over long periods of time. These two nuances are of importance for studying the construction of collective identities.

The contextual factor is essential for making sense of a discourse (Stoegner and Wodak, 2016: 196). While some approaches undertake a micro-contextual analysis of the text in the social setting in which it was produced, or received, others look at the broader macro-context in which meaning is socially constructed, interpreted, reproduced, or challenged. For instance, Wodak (2011) establishes a four-level model of context which takes into account the text itself, the extra-linguistic social elements of the text, the socio-historical context in which a text is embedded, and intertextual and interdiscursive elements of the context. It is this latter layer of context which allows researchers to establish the common ground of different discourses, across different periods of time. Baker and his colleagues describe these categories as follows:

[E]xtra-linguistic social/socio-political variables, the history and “archaeology” of an organisation, institutional frames of a specific context of situation and processes of text production, text-reception and text consumption. (Baker et al., 2008: 280)

In this thesis, the contextual factor is taken into account synchronically, and diachronically. First, the media coverage of the Congresses is complemented by a micro-contextual thematic analysis of the whole newspaper, as well as through qualitative interviews with media actors from different generations, which provide essential details about the context in which the texts have been written. Second, (partially) fixed articulations of ‘the people’ are explored through a macro-contextual analysis: a short time frame from the moment in which ‘the Party’ calls its citizens to

the Congress, until the congress takes place (between 13 and 18 months); a medium time frame between the IV and the VI congresses (20 years); and a long-time frame in which discourses are traced back to pre-revolutionary Cuban history.³⁷

3.3 - Mixed Methods Approach

This thesis aims to analyse the relationship between the construction of the Cuban people in the state-owned press, as well as the way in which this interacts with the practices and identities of Cuban journalists. In order to do so, it takes a mixed-methods approach to the analysis of the data, triangulating the findings of the different qualitative approaches (Baker et al., 2008: 295). In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the main shortcomings of critical discourse analysis, and explain how the adoption of a mixed methods approach allows researchers to overcome most of these challenges.

3.3.1 - Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

A close look at CDA shows the lack of a clear theoretical and methodological approach (Wodak, 1999). Some scholars (Baker et al., 2008) consider that CDA is not a method, and it cannot be associated with a specific method of analysis either. According to this perspective, it is possible to triangulate CDA with other qualitative and even quantitative methods of analysis. Previous research shows that it is possible to study populist discourse from a mixed methods approach. For instance, Carpentier and De Cleen (2007) have combined CDA with qualitative content analysis, while de Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak (1999) have used discourse analysis of political discourses and newspaper articles with qualitative interviews.

The use of CDA has been criticised for different reasons. First, small samples might not account for all the nuances of the discourse, such as internal contradictions or inconsistencies, as well as discursive evolution throughout time (Baker et al., 2008). Another criticism has been the focus on exceptional elements that, while not being necessarily representative, resonate with the arguments that the researcher wants to put forward (Koller and Mautner, 2004: 218; Baker et al., 2008: 283). Therefore, CDA might miss the systematicity and density of linguistic patterns, as well as rhetorical strategies and, therefore, the degree of influence that these elements might have in the overall coverage of a topic (Fairclough, 1989; Baker et al., 2008: 283).

³⁷ I refer to (partially) fixed articulations of ‘the people’ as structures of meaning that are relatively stable, and which have sedimented in a given political discourse (Gaonkar, 2012).

The combination of critical discourse analysis with qualitative content analysis in Atlas.ti has been essential for addressing some of the shortcomings commonly associated with qualitative research. First, it allows the researcher to look at a wider sample of analysis over longer periods of time, and to take into account the density of codes in order to highlight the prominence of certain topics and linguistic strategies. The qualitative coding of all news stories that mention the Congresses allows the data to be representative, and the analysis of latent meaning and ‘non-frequency’ nuances is facilitated through the combination of macro and micro levels of linguistic analysis. Second, the use of families of codes allows the researcher to guide and systematise the analysis of the data, while allowing the creation of NVivo sub-codes that are able to account for the rich, in-depth, contextual nuances.

3.3.2 - Content Analysis

In this section, I have explained that the study of populism as a socially constructed (and constantly re-constructed) Manichaean opposition between ‘the people’ (‘us’) and their enemies (‘them’) often lacks an explanation of the processes by which construction takes place. Therefore, previous literature has started looking at the study of the media as potential actors in the discursive dissemination and construction of populism. According to Macdonald (2003: 55), the media are important actors in the social world and, as powerful narrative makers, are able to constitute the very realities that are referenced in media texts. In this thesis, the media are seen not only as disseminating selective frames of the outside world but, in doing so, constructing and re-constructing individual and social conceptions of reality.

Attempts to systematically examine the content of written material date back to the 17th century, mostly related to religious attempts to supervise the convenience of certain publications (Schreier, 2012: 19). However, the interest of understanding the content of the media increased in the second half of the 19th century, with the popularisation of newspapers and the creation of departments of Journalism (Schreier, 2012). The focus was on the norms of ‘objective’ reporting, and implied comparisons between different publications, quantifying keywords, page numbers, position in the page, etc. Content analysis became a scientific method of analysis throughout the early 20th century, with the development of social sciences and an increasing theoretical interest for the social effects of media content (Schreier, 2012: 20). This development was contemporary to the efforts of Harold Laswell, head of the US department of wartime communication, for understanding Nazi propaganda in the context of both production, and reception. Around the mid-20th century content analysis had become a regular tool for analysing media messages,

increasingly focusing on the context of production and reception, as well as on the interrelation between the categories.

Berelson (1952: 18) published the first textbook on content analysis in 1952, defining it as an '*objective, systematic and quantitative*' technique for examining the '*manifest*' content of a text. However, his definition was challenged from early on by researchers that understood the meaning of a text as multi-layered and context-dependent and, therefore, not necessarily confined to specific words, or frequency (Kracauer, 1952). Similarly, other researchers criticised the focus on repetition, and proposed 'non-frequency' models that took into account the strategic use or absence of key elements in the text (George, 1959; Holsti, 1969). The evolution of content analysis has brought about a scholarly debate regarding the limits of its quantitative or qualitative nature. Some scholars differentiate Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) as a method in itself for systematically analysing qualitative data, focused on manifest rather than latent meaning, which requires a contextual analysis for its understanding (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008; Hussy et al., 2013; Mayring, 2014).

Certain scholars have used quantitative content analysis in the analysis of populist political discourse (see Jagers and Walgrave, 2007). Content analysis has often appeared as a filter used to find relevant passages referring to 'the people', understood as the minimal condition for the existence of a populist discourse, reducing the data and selecting key passages for a qualitative analysis. However, the use of quantitative methods of analysis has been criticised for being too superficial for grasping the nature of populist discourse. In the literature review, the researcher defined populism as a discourse that does not limit itself to references to 'the people', but which defines 'the people' against an 'enemy' in a Manichean way (Laclau, 2005a; Hawkins, 2009). The discursive opposition between 'the people' and 'the enemy' is visible for Van Dijk (1998) not only through lexicalisation, but also through more nuanced semantic and structural elements that cannot be grasped in a simple quantitative content analysis. From a qualitative conceptualisation of populism, there is no single word or sentence that could, by itself, characterise it (Mudde, 2004).

In this research, I will follow Krippendorff's (2014) understanding of content analysis as a qualitative method of analysis, going beyond theoretical divisions between its quantitative or qualitative nature. Therefore, I will use content analysis by looking at the relationship of manifest meaning – meaning as it appears in the text – within the context in which the text was produced. This means that I will not only conduct a multi-layered, holistic reading of the text, but will also

examine the meaning of the text within the whole paper, and within the socioeconomic and political context in which it was produced.

3.3.3 - Interviews

Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) Discourse Theory has been criticised for overly focusing on an abstract articulation of discourses, '*bypassing the moment of subjectivity*' (Howarth, 2008: 185) and undermining the ability of social agents to consciously construct discourses that challenge the hegemonic order. The use of interviews has allowed the analysis to go beyond formal political discourses or media texts, and to look at the strategies by which these discourses are appropriated or resisted by media actors outside of the state-owned media environment. It allows the researcher to look at the way in which those involved in writing media texts see their identities and their actions beyond journalistic working routines.

The main goal of the interviews is to take discourse to other contexts, to concrete scenarios of daily practice, and to examine the way in which discourses are reinterpreted and recontextualised in practice. This also allows the identification of contradictions between official discourses and journalists' discourses of belonging, and between journalists' discourses and practice.

Western scholars have mostly focused on the influence of blogs and social media in the reinforcement of an independent sphere of debate and, therefore, in the democratisation of information and communication flows in Cuba (Venegas, 2007; Hoffmann, 2011; Díaz Rodríguez and Firuzeh Sokoo, 2013; Rubira and Gil-Egui, 2013; Henken, 2017). Without undermining the relevance of those scholarly debates, the current body of literature has not been able to assess the way in which the Internet and digital media influence not only the agenda of the mainstream institutional media, but also debates about current journalistic structures and practices. With few exceptions (Pérez González, 2012; Rivero, 2015) the Cuban official media has remained widely understudied outside Cuba. Even if graduate and postgraduate research on Cuban media is now common in the Island's seven journalism schools, scholarly work is relatively recent and remains mostly unpublished, limited to academic circles (García Luis, 2013). Although many scholars argue that any changes in the course of 'the Revolution' will have to come from the Island, as many generations have fought for sovereignty, there is no insightful study on the role that current journalists are playing in the reconfiguration of Cuban journalism, working not only as compliant servants of 'the Revolution', but also as critical agents of structural change from within (Fernandes, 2006; Mujal-León and Langenbacher, 2008; Sweig, 2009).

Interviews are a useful tool of data collection as they allow the researcher to explore additional issues and topics that surface throughout the research process (Crang, 2002). In this case, the interviews are considered a complement to the qualitative analysis, opening a space for dialogue and reflection surrounding the evolving role of journalists in the discursive reproduction of populism.

Following Laclau (2005) and de Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak (1999), this thesis argues that identities are never constructed and fixed in a coherent and stable discourse. On the contrary, I understand identities as multiple, changing, fragile, and even contradictory. It is important to note the difference between '*top-down procedures of hegemonic public opinion-making*', which can be reflected in politicians' discourses or newspaper articles, and '*bottom-up processes*' in which media actors are able to reflect critically on official discourses (de Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak., 1999: 153).

While logistical factors did not allow for the organisation of many focus groups, the way in which discourses were negotiated in public was considered through two group interviews, one with journalists and another with bloggers, through ethnographic work (the assistance of the researcher to undergraduate and postgraduate students' public defence of their final theses) and through the analysis of magazines from the Union of Cuban Journalists, which publish the result of journalists' discussions during professional congresses and periods of debate.

Finally, the choice of semi-structured interviews has allowed the researcher to keep certain coherence in the articulation of the questions, while privileging interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Therefore, when using semi-structured interviews, I argue that knowledge is contextual and socially constructed through the interaction between individuals (Mason, 2002: 62). This method of analysis is coherent with my ontological position, since I consider that personal knowledge, opinions and ideas are scientifically meaningful. Similarly, the use of interviews is coherent with my epistemological position, since I understand journalists' values, and normative claims, as a discourse on itself that interacts with the discourse of the media.

3.4 - Methodological Rationale

In this section, I will discuss the research traditions that guide my research and I will argue that taking a social constructivist approach to meaning is coherent with my theoretical framework, Discourse Analysis, and my methodological approach, which combines a discourse theoretical analysis (DTA) and a discourse historical approach (DHA).

In chapter two, I have explained that this study is grounded in the ontological assumption that reality is socially constructed through contingent articulations of meaning (Howarth, 2015). Therefore, this thesis is underpinned by a constructivist idea of social reality. A social constructivist approach, I will argue, is useful for understanding the way in which Cuban official newspaper *Granma* has articulated ‘the people’ in times of national debate. From a social constructivist approach, the main category of analysis in this thesis, ‘the Cuban people’, is seen as socially constructed through discourse, rather than a given or natural group. Therefore, using a social constructivist approach has enabled me to explore the power relations that foster a particular construction of ‘the Cuban people’ in periods of national debate. A construction that helps to legitimise I will argue, the maintenance of the revolutionary hegemonic project.

In this thesis, I look at the social construction of the category of ‘the people’ through the discourse of Cuban newspaper *Granma* (chapters four and five) and the discourse of Cuban journalists (chapter six). This approach draws on the assumption that the media do not simply reflect the social world. Rather than seeing the media, and journalism, as simple mirrors that reflect the outside world, I see both of them as social institutions that help to construct, reproduce and transform it. The discourse of the media, and that of journalists, help construct certain versions of social reality, contributing to the visibility, credibility and consolidation of certain hegemonic discourses.

Social constructivism argues that primary meaning is created through the interaction between individuals, whose subject identity is constructed at the same time as the creation of meaning takes place (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). De Cleen and Stavrakakis (2017: 307) consider that collective identity is constructed through this process of discursive interpellation and identification. The role of discourse in the construction of a collective identity is twofold. Discourses offer individuals a range of subject positions they can identify with. At the same time, individuals are constructed as subjects through the interpellation of these same discourses. Therefore, discourse articulates a collective identity inasmuch as it creates the identity of those individuals that it articulates. In the context of this thesis, this point is essential for understanding the relationship between the discourse of the press, and the discourse of journalists. While Cuban newspaper *Granma* mediates the construction of a collective identity named ‘the Cuban people’, Cuban journalists are interpellated by this discourse, which influences their collective identification and the way in which they position themselves within the hegemonic discourse of ‘the Revolution’.

The use of a social constructivist approach has several implications for this thesis. The first implication of using a constructivist approach is that the media are seen to be discursively disseminating and constructing knowledge about the world in an ideological way. In the context of the Cuban Revolution, ‘the people’ are discursively articulated in a manner that reinforces a particular hegemonic project, enhancing the ‘good’ properties and actions of the hegemonic in-group, while portraying the out-group as an enemy (Mouffe, 2005; Hawkins, 2010). In this sense, the construction of ‘the people’ is ideological inasmuch as it naturalises a particular representation of collective identity that advances the goals of the hegemonic group. In Laclau’s words, (2006b: 103) ‘*ideology is the representational, metaphorical and precarious closure that stabilizes meaning within specific contexts*’.

The second implication is that I see ‘the people’ as a socially constructed category that can be articulated in the discourse of the media and journalists according to competing logics that are contingent, rather than pre-given.³⁸ The third implication lays on the importance of analysing the way in which collective identity is presented in a hegemonic discourse. This is essential for understanding the way in which meaning is created in a way that supports certain power relations. The fourth implication lies in the relevance of studying the way in which individuals position themselves in relation to ‘the people’ within a hegemonic project. This is relevant for understanding the way in which individual positions fit within a system, whether reproducing, questioning or challenging the hegemonic discourse. In this thesis, I look at the construction of subjective positions through the discourse of Cuban journalists.

Social constructivism has been criticised for different reasons. First, essentialist approaches to social constructivism are seen to be holding an excessively relativist approach to knowledge. Some scholars argue that social reality ‘*is not something outside the discourse of science*’ (Delanty and Rumford, 2005: 136, 137). We have to assume that, since all research traditions are socially constructed, it is hard to argue that social constructivism would be ontologically superior to other approaches at unveiling reality (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009: 38). Therefore, excessive relativism can be of little help for understanding the way in which certain views of the social world are foregrounded or backgrounded through discourse.

Second, social constructivism has been criticised for its excessive focus on discourse. For instance, Laclau and Mouffe have argued that there is nothing in the real world outside discourse (Torfig, 1999: 219; Boucher, 2009: 10). However, Phillips and Jorgensen (2002: 6) argue that,

³⁸ ‘The people’ would be constructed following a populist logic when they are unified around a core discourse, while they would be constructed following an institutional logic when the category of ‘the people’ remains fragmented.

despite the predominant relativism of social constructivism, many researchers adopt a middle-ground approach that recognises the existence of – more or less – stable structures of knowledge. This seems to be a common approach in discourse theoretical studies (Laclau 2006a; Carpentier and De Cleen, 2007; De Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2017). According to this view, even if the articulation of nodal points within a given hegemonic discourse is contingent and exposed to fluctuation, there are structures of meaning that remain stable over time (Laclau, 2005a; De Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2017).

Following Carpentier and De Cleen's work, I have developed a middle-ground approach to social constructivism. This has one main advantage for my research: it allows me to look at three layers of discourse according to the stability of the meaning they construct. First, the recognition of relatively stable –or partially fixed– structures of meaning has allowed me to (1) examine more thoroughly the influence of historical constructions of collective identity in the revolutionary articulation of 'the Cuban people'. Second, this approach has enabled me to (2) identify the master signifiers –or 'nodal points'– that provide stability to the revolutionary discourse. Finally, it has allowed me to (3) examine the fluctuation of discourses throughout time –that is, their rearticulation.

In developing a social constructivist approach, I argue that populist discourse can be unmasked by analysing the way in which political subjects become 'the people', that is, the way in which individual identity is transformed into a collective identity through discourse. In this sense, I define populism as a type of political discourse that constructs an in-group, 'the people', as opposed to an out-group, 'the enemy', temporarily stabilising a contingent articulation of power relations.³⁹ Power, as defined by Reisigl and Wodak (2015: 88), refers to '*an asymmetric relationship among social actors who assume different social positions or belong to different social groups*'.

In the introductory chapter, I have stated my preference for a discursive approach to populism. In his work on social semiotics and sociology, Norman Fairclough (2001) challenges the view of language as a simple linguistic phenomenon that is independent from society. Instead, the scholar defines language as a social practice that should be studied through discourse. The study of populism as discourse entails ontological and epistemological assumptions that are at the core of scholarly debates. From an ontological perspective, it is important to consider whether populism can be seen in ideational terms (Carpentier and De Cleen, 2007). Yet another debate centres on whether populism can be studied as an analytical category, independently from practical

³⁹ The definition of discourse as articulation is further discussed in chapter two.

manifestations in the discourse of populist movements (Hawkins, 2010: 49). Other scholars have discussed whether populism can be classified as an ideology (Mudde, 2004) and, if it is such, what differentiates it from other ideologies such as nationalism (De Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2017).

In this thesis, I make a series of ontological assumptions by defining populism as a set of ideas about the nature and the role of ‘the people’ in society, which are expressed through discourse. In using the term ‘populism’, I establish an analytical difference between (1) ontic approaches to populism, which examine the content and the language used by leaders, political parties or social movements that draw on a populist discourse and (2) ontological approaches to populism, which examine the articulation of meaning through higher structures of abstraction (Laclau, 2005b: 153). In this thesis, I am interested in both an ontic and an ontological approach to populism. Finally, I define populism as a thin-centred ideology (Mudde, 2004) that constructs citizens as ‘the common people’, which is threatened by a powerful enemy. However, I agree with De Cleen and Stavrakakis (2017) when they observe that the ‘thinness’ of populism implies its ability to adopt the discourse of other political ideologies, such as nationalism. For instance, ‘the people’ can be constructed both as ‘the common people’ and as ‘a nation’ in populist discourse, posing analytical and empirical problems.

The ontological underpinnings of this thesis entail epistemological assumptions that lie at the core of my methodological rationale. Taking this debate to the study of populism in Revolutionary Cuba, I examine the structures of meaning that have underpinned the construction of ‘the Cuban people’ –such as historical assumptions and stable signifiers– through a discourse theoretical approach to discourse analysis. This is the main theoretical and methodological approach in this thesis. However, I am also interested in the particular way in which these stable structures of meaning are presented in the content of Cuban newspaper *Granma*. I use a discourse historical approach to examine nomination, predication and argumentation strategies in the construction of nodal points.

3.5 - Sampling and Data Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis needs to be conducted from an abductive point of view. This means that the researcher needs to be explicit about the way in which the analysis is conducted at each step, and the way in which it incorporates inductive and deductive elements (Wodak, 1999: 186). This thesis goes beyond simplistic explanations, looking in depth into the complexity and contradictions that arise in discourse. In this section, I discuss the overall methodological

approach. Then I address the way in which I have analysed the concept of ‘the people’ in Cuban national newspaper, *Granma*, and in interviews with Cuban journalists.

In the previous section, I have explained that I develop a methodological approach that takes elements from discourse theoretical analysis and discourse historical analysis. When I discuss the ‘construction’ of the Cuban people, I do so from two different approaches to discourse analysis. From an ontological perspective, this has allowed me to look at populism as a specific logic of articulation. First, I have analysed the way in which the hegemonic discourse of the Revolution has (partially) fixed structures of meaning –or nodal points– that have constructed ‘the people’ as opposed to an external other, ‘the enemy’. From an ontic perspective, this has enabled me to examine the ways in which such articulation is linguistically presented in the discourse of *Granma* through three strategies: nomination, predication, and argumentation (Reisigl and Wodak 2015).

First, I understand nomination as the way in which social actors, events and other phenomena are categorised. Therefore, nomination focuses on identifying categories that structure discourse, that is, nodal points: (1) ‘the people’, (2) ‘the enemy’, (3) the leader, (4) the nation, and (5) journalism. Second, I use perspectivation as a strategy for identifying the attributes of these nodal points. Finally, I look at argumentation as the linguistic strategies by which nodal points are articulated in equivalential chains. From a discourse theoretical perspective, articulation implies a partial and fictitious account of reality. Therefore, the main focus is on the use of fallacies. The analysis has been conducted following a mixed-methods approach that combines content analysis, discourse theoretical analysis, and discourse historical analysis. In following Reisigl and Wodak (2015), I have approached these three methods as disparate ways of exploring ‘context’: (1) the broader socio-political and historical context; (2) discourse as an articulation of meaning, and (3) discourse as linguistic strategies. This can be seen in the table below:

I started the analysis of the data with a content analysis of the interviews that I conducted with Cuban journalists.⁴⁰ This was the first set of data that I collected and, given the scarcity of research on the Cuban institutional media, the interviews provided relevant contextual information. This was a preliminary analysis based on five nodal points that I had identified in the literature: (1) ‘the people’, (2) ‘the enemy’, (3) the leader, (4) the nation, and (5) journalism. Then, I collected newspaper articles from the Cuban newspaper, *Granma* at the José Martí National Library (Havana, Cuba) in their original paper format, since it was not possible to access digitalised archives on the periods under study. Access to the data was a slow process due to

⁴⁰ The interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and uploaded to Atlas.ti

organisational rules at the Biblioteca José Martí, as well as to the poor conservation of old newspaper issues, which were brittle and needed to be handled very carefully.

While collecting the data at the library, I examined all the issues in *Granma* during the period of analysis (1990-1991, and 2010-2012). Through thematic analysis, I identified the main current events that were covered in the paper. This thematic analysis revealed important contextualisation that allowed me to understand the historical setting in which the debates took place. This was the last step in the preliminary content analysis, and was aimed at obtaining contextual information about the political and socioeconomic context, as well as better understanding the Cuban media system.

I used relevance sampling to select all news items that mentioned the IV or the VI Congresses of the Communist Party of Cuba, and the national debates that preceded them. This allowed me to take into account the suitability of the news item in terms of length and content so as to fit the scope of the research. The choice of an intentional, relevance sampling allowed me to significantly reduce the number of news stories, while making sure all the relevant material was included. This was an important element, since coverage of the Congresses varied from month to month, and did not follow any clear pattern. The unit of analysis was the news story, although I also coded interviews, opinion articles, published political discourses, and letters to the editors (the latter only available during the period of ‘Updating’). This wide selection of material provided a more contextualised analysis of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, making visible the discourse of journalists, intellectuals, citizens, and political leaders.

I selected all published material that made an explicit reference to the IV or the VI Congresses of the Cuban Communist Party. News stories were mostly located on the front page, as well as in the national and international sections of *Granma*. The decision to examine both the national and international sections of the newspaper responds to the logic of the Cuban media, which tends to build a positive image of Cuba in the national pages, while demonising other countries in the international section (Garcés, 2013; García Luis, 2013). Looking at both sections allowed me to grasp the way *Granma* constructed ‘the Cuban people’ as opposed to internal dangers (national section), and external enemies (international section). The sampling of news stories does not intend to be representative of the content of the whole newspaper, but rather focuses on the discursive construction of unity as presented in the coverage of the congresses. In total, there were 560 news stories that fit these criteria: 320 in the first period (1990-1991), and 240 in the second period (2010-2012). Given the considerable amount of material and the length of my stay in Havana, I made digital copies of these items and uploaded them on Atlas.ti

Once the data was uploaded on Atlas.ti, I started the second phase of analysis and examined the way in which *Granma* constructed ‘the people’ in news items. I simultaneously conducted a content analysis, aimed at identifying nodal points and their attributes, and a discourse analysis.⁴¹ The discourse analysis, as explained above, focused on (1) an ontological approach to discourse that looked at the structure and articulation of nodal points, and (2) an ontic approach to discourse that looked at linguistic strategies of nomination, predication, and argumentation.

The four nodal points that I had identified in the literature (‘the people’, ‘the enemy’, ‘the leader’, and the nation) were modified and adapted to the nature of the data. This resulted in five categories of nodal points, which represent different collective identities: (1) ‘the people’, (2) ‘the enemy’, (3) the leader, (4) the nation, and (5) journalism. Finally, I went back to the interviews and analysed the articulation of these five nodal points in the discourse of journalists. Throughout the analysis, these nodal points were used as a matrix for creating sub-codes. The coding followed a NVivo model, being rather textual and attempting to capture the original meaning in the text. This created a considerable amount of codes, sorted by prefixes that identified the source of the information (the people, intellectuals, blue collar workers, white collar workers, party leaders, Fidel Castro...), as well as their matrix.⁴²

The validity of the coding frame was achieved through a series of steps. First, I built an initial coding frame with four theory-driven categories of codes, in order to see to what extent, what Hawkins (2010) calls the ‘universal’ clusters of populism, were present in the selected newspapers. Second, I added data-driven categories that were specific to the way in which ‘the Cuban people’ are represented in *Granma*. Then, these categories were discussed with my supervisor at the Faculty of Communication, Rayza Portal, and with two Cuban researchers who have extensively worked on the notion of the Cuban ‘people’, the historian Fernando Martínez Heredia and the sociologist Ailynn Torres Santana. After this process, new theoretical insights were incorporated. The consistency of the coding frame was tested through the coding of a sample (ten percent of the material), one month after the analysis was completed. This allowed me to identify certain patterns of repetition that were conveniently addressed.

⁴¹ The results of the content analysis that identify nodal points and their attributes can be seen in Annex II.

⁴² For instance, the sub-code ‘Fid role people resist’ identifies the source of the information, Fidel Castro, the matrix, values and roles, and the specific role that appears in the text. The sub-code ‘leadv unity all the people’ refers to the voice of a leader, who establishes discursive unity through a *pars pro toto metonymy*, that is, by assuming that the voice of a part of the people represents the national will.

Table 1. **Methodological Approach**

Method	Source	Sections	Context	Discourse	Analysis
Content Analysis	<i>Granma</i> <i>Interviews with Cuban journalists</i>	A. Front page, national and international sections, back cover B. Front page, national section and back cover	A. Broader socio-political and historical context B. Extralinguistic structures of meaning	Non-discursive Analysis of categories in a pre-discursive phase	Inductive A. Thematic analysis of current news / Thematic analysis of interviews B. Identification of nodal points in <i>Granma</i>
Discourse theoretical analysis	<i>Granma</i> <i>Interviews with Cuban journalists</i>	Front page, national section and back cover	Extralinguistic structures of meaning	Ontological approach to populism	Relationship between nodal points Structures of articulation and rearticulation of Meaning
Discourse historical analysis	<i>Granma</i>	Front page, national section and back cover	Immediate language Discursive strategies	Ontic approach to populism	Nomination Predication Argumentation

3.6 - Positionality

In the introduction, I have explained the challenges of being a foreign researcher in a country in which outsiders have often been regarded as a threat, as enemies always prepared to discredit Cuba, and the Revolution, without making an effort to understand either. During my stay on the Island I was always conscious of my ‘foreignness’ and how Cubans might distrust me. Before conducting fieldwork at the Faculty of Communication (University of Havana), I was also concerned about the degree of triumphalism in journalists’ accounts, since they could be inclined to offer a rather positive image of the Revolution. Puerto Rican researcher Yudaimy Rivero (2015) writes about the challenges of being a foreign researcher in Cuba as follows:

At the Centro de Investigaciones del Instituto Cubano de Radio y Televisión, one of the two main places where I conducted my research, one which openly criticized the government, those compañeros who became friends did not hesitate to complain

about the Castro brothers' regime in private conversations. Yet, this private/public division and the additional pressure of focusing on the contributions of the Cuban Revolution when talking in public (and particularly in front of a foreigner such as myself), influenced one of my projected research methodologies. (Rivero, 2015: 15)

While Rivero's account relates in some degree to my own experience, I have observed minor differences in discourse between public and private accounts that journalists and media experts offered during the interviews. During my fieldwork, I worked daily from the Department of Journalism Studies' main office at University of Havana, and I engaged with private conversations with many academics, who often worked as journalists on the side. I also visited the main office of different institutional media outlets on many occasions, and met journalists who worked there, and who had since moved on to the non-institutional sector. One of the things that impressed me the most was the degree of consensus in the discourse of academics, journalists, and those who worked in blogs or non-institutional digital projects. While they all had different opinions regarding journalists' personal responsibility for the problems present in Cuban media, and their capacity to change the model from below, they all agreed on the need for structural changes.⁴³

The coherence between the interviewees' private and public discourses could be explained by the climate of consensus that the 2013 Congress of the Union of Cuban Journalists generated. During the Congress, Party leaders presented the publication of a highly critical book about the Cuban media, written by former journalist (very close to Fidel Castro in the 1990s) and dean of the Faculty of Communication, Julio García Luis. During my fieldwork, I came under the impression that the book's publication (nine years after it was submitted as a doctoral thesis) had loosened up tensions, allowing journalists and academics to feel more comfortable when expressing their concerns publicly. Very often, journalists asked whether I had read the doctoral thesis of Julio García Luis, quoting his work as a way of legitimising their own criticism.

The opening interview questions asked the respondents to summarise the main virtues and problems of the Cuban media. This question aimed at giving the interviewees the freedom to feel comfortable with their position, without initial judgements. Overall, criticism outweighed

⁴³ I have explained that Cuban media outlets are institutionally linked to different revolutionary organisations. Therefore, I refer to the Cuban traditional, official media as institutional. Similarly, I define those projects that are not institutionally-linked to the Revolution as non-institutional. While most of the digital projects I analyse in this thesis are independent, alternative media projects, I consider that the use of non-institutional is more accurate for encompassing them all. For instance, *Vistar* and *OnCuba* are officially registered as foreign media, while *El Toque* is funded by the Dutch government.

triumphalism in twenty-three out of twenty-five interviews (this point will be further discussed in chapter six). I believe that the openness of the first question made the interviewees feel comfortable with their position, and was key to fostering mutual trust. Another element that, in my opinion, contributed to a relaxed setting was my decision to familiarise myself with the way Cubans talk about journalism. After my first visit to the Faculty, I had to wait two weeks for my student visa and could not legally conduct any interviews during this period. I used this time to review dozens of undergraduate and postgraduate theses on Cuban media, written by students at the Faculty of Communication. I believe that this was essential for identifying sensitive topics, and finding a familiar and respectful way of addressing censorship in the media, or politicians' apparent lack of will to open the media up to debate. I learnt to use 'external control', rather than censorship; and 'postponement', rather than 'lack of will'. At the Faculty, I was asked to be honest about the nature of my research, and 'responsible' with my account. This responsibility did not entail portraying Cuba as a paradise. Instead, I was invited to observe the contextual factors that influenced the development of the Cuban media system, as well as the nuanced debates that shaped media policies over time. I did not feel any further pressure, either at the Faculty nor in any other institutions that I visited.

During my research stays in Havana, I had access to Cuban publications on the role of the media in the Revolution. Nevertheless, the overall body of published academic research on Cuban media is scarce, both inside Cuba and abroad. While Cuban academia has been gaining certain independence over the last few years (Hernández, 2008), academic publications remain within the limits of revolutionary consensus.⁴⁴ However, this does not mean that all books are strictly 'official', or completely uncritical. Some works are highly critical of the ways media and cultural policies have been designed and implemented over time (although not of the political system itself). As Lillian Guerra (2012: 34) recognises, *'the state produced not only triumphalist texts but also instructively critical guides that recognised and identified resistance'*.

While the ultimate goals of academic works published in Cuba can be questioned, I considered that it was relevant to include the research of Cuban scholars for two main reasons. First, they offer valuable information and insights that are hardly available outside of Cuba. Second, their

⁴⁴ It is important to highlight that all editorials in Cuba belong to the state, or revolutionary cultural organisations. For instance, *Casa de las Américas* was founded by the Cuban government, the *Institute Juan Marinello* is supported by the Science Ministry, and *Editorial Félix Varela* is affiliated with the Ministry of Higher Education.

‘officialness’ is a useful tool for understanding the way the media system has been conceived and organised under the revolutionary government, as well as the limits of allowed criticism.

The work of Cuban scholars often remains unpublished, even at the highest level (such as doctoral theses). During my fieldwork, I had access to recent unpublished research conducted at University of Havana. Some of this research might remain unpublished because it is not considered sufficiently academic, especially at an undergraduate level. However, the interviews reveal that access to carefully researched postgraduate theses often remains unpublished for political reasons, with the goal of compartmentalising knowledge and restricting public debate. For instance, August (2013: 141) acknowledges that, despite a vivid debate within academia, there is ‘*a virtual censorship*’ on the work of Cuban social researchers. In this work, I have used a careful selection of unpublished works that were recommended by leading Cuban scholars and that I have personally reviewed. Those provided comprehensive context and insights when no other published sources were available.

Final Remarks

The methodological chapter has explained the main characteristics of the case study. Then, it has developed the analytical framework of this work, as well as the selection of a qualitative mixed-methods approach. This approach is coherent with the main rationale of the research, as it has been argued in the fourth section. Finally, the chapter has explained the process of sampling and the analysis of the data. Any ethical issues concerning this research will be discussed in the ethical form that is included in the thesis, as well as the consent forms that have been signed by the interviewees.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion I. The Articulation of Unity in Periods of National Debate

This chapter analyses the way in which Cuban national newspaper *Granma* has constructed ‘the people’ during periods of national debate. The first two sections of the chapter examine the way in which the newspaper has constructed a particular collective identity, reinforcing the hegemony of the revolutionary project. This chapter sets out to analyse the role of the press in supporting the official discourse of the Party. However, chapters five and six demonstrate the limits of hegemonic articulation, since the official message has been contested both in the state-owned press and in the discourse of journalists. In this chapter, the data indicates that *Granma* constructs ‘the people’ in terms of ‘nation’ and ‘underdog’, combining strategies of nationalist and populist discourse. In the press, Cubans share a series of historical roles and values that identify them as a differentiated group, as a humble, hard-working people able to face adversity. This is relevant, since ‘the people’ are seen as opposed to (1) an internal elite, embodied by the bureaucratic class, and to (2) an external enemy, embodied by the United States. The chapter goes on to examine in more detail the discursive strategies –both from an ontic and from an ontological approach– that have constructed the unity of the Cuban people in times of crisis. In the following lines, I will contextualise the two periods of debate that are analysed in the findings chapters.

The first period of analysis (1990-1991) takes place during the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the crisis of socialism in Eastern and Central Europe. Given Cuba’s membership of the COMECON (‘The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance’), and the country’s economic dependence on trade and subsidies from the Soviet Union, the Island entered a period of economic depression that was officially named ‘The Special Period in Time of Peace’ (*El Periodo Especial en Tiempos de Paz*). During this period, the Communist Party of Cuba called citizens to debate a document containing a series of guidelines that were to improve the social and economic situation of the country. The call to debate was officially announced in *Granma* on 15 March 1990, coinciding with the 12th anniversary of the ‘Baraguá Protest’. The Congress was dedicated to the remembrance of the Ten Years’ War that led to national independence from Spain. Citizens were called to debate the guidelines within a designated setting, such as the workplace, community meetings of Party organisations. The IV Congress of the Party took place

from 10 to 14 October 1991. In this chapter, I will make references to 19th-century events that paved the way to independence, such as ‘The Cry of Yara’ or the ‘Pact of Zanjón’, and to revolutionary actors that led those events, such as José Martí, Antonio Maceo or Carlos Manuel de Céspedes.

The second period of analysis (2010-2012) takes place during Raúl Castro’s leadership, after Fidel Castro’s transfer of power to his brother in 2008. On 8 August 2010, Cuban newspaper *Granma* announced a Party-led call to citizens, who were invited to discuss a draft of the ‘guidelines of the economic and social policies of the Party and the Revolution’ (*‘lineamientos de la política económica y social’*). These guidelines would lead to an ‘Updating of the Economic and Social Model’ (*‘Actualización del Modelo Económico y Social’*). The VI Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba started on 16 April 2011, commemorating the 50th anniversary of Cuba’s victory against the CIA-backed invasion of Playa Girón (‘Bay of Pigs’). While the Congress had a purely economic focus, militants of the Party were called to discuss political and structural issues in a different event, the ‘First National Conference of the Party’ (*‘Primera Conferencia Nacional del Partido’*), which took place on 28 January 2012.

4.1 - Who are ‘the Cuban People’? The Articulation of Collective Identity

This section looks at the discursive construction of ‘the people’ in *Granma* by focusing on discursive strategies of nomination: Who are ‘the people’ and how are they divided into inclusionary and exclusionary categories of belonging? ‘The Cuban people’ are constructed in the press in terms of ideal roles and values, which are inherited from national heroes and represented by ‘the best’ revolutionaries. In both periods, ‘the Party’ makes a call to all Cubans, asking them to discuss the guidelines that would be approved in the congresses, whether they are militant in the Communist Party of Cuba or not. However, ‘the Party’ clearly articulates militants as an example to follow, incarnating the roles and values of ‘the best people’. Militants have more decision-making power, as well as more visibility in the national press, and most news stories cover debates held by delegates, rather than workers.

The IV Congress (1991) was dedicated to Antonio Maceo’s intransigence in Baraguá, when he refused to negotiate the terms of national independence with Spanish colonial authorities. The VI Congress (2011) was a commemoration of Bay of Pigs victory (*la victoria de Playa Girón*). Baraguá and Girón are constructed as the triumph of ‘sublime’ independence and revolutionary

fighters, who opposed the ‘miserable’ supporters of ‘the enemy’ (Lee, 10 October 1991). Therefore, they are the proof that ‘the people’, ‘the underdog’, can face any battles with nothing but their patriotism, by their genuine love for the nation. The excerpt below illustrates the way in which nationalism transforms the poor into an all-powerful army through a set of values:

In order to reach our current times, a legion of patriots charged naked, starving and poorly armed against the cramped cadres of the Spanish gunfire in order to open a big clearance among its lines. It was from the furnace of war, from the fights that we have endured over 123 years, that the Homeland was forged. There was Zanjón, but there was also Baraguá. Miserable and sublime human beings; those supporting annexionism, and those supporting independence. Defeat and victories. But we never lacked the spirit and the hope and the trust in carrying on and winning; nobility and honour always won. (Lee, 10 October 1991)

In the following lines, I will analyse the articulation of ‘the Cuban people’ through a focus on groups that are seen as having a differentiated identity. These groups are (1) Cuban heroes, (2) the working class, (3) the youth, (4) new categories of ‘the people’, and (5) those who consciously exclude themselves from popular belonging (‘the others’).

4.1.1 - The Heroic People

In the revolutionary discourse, ‘the Cuban people’ are discursively constructed as carrying not only the legacy, but also the burden of past heroes. Consequently, they are subject to pressure to conform to historically inherited moral values, which are co-opted by revolutionary discourse. Since Cubans have historically faced fierce dangers, ‘the people’ carry an exceptional historical responsibility. The heroes that inspire ‘the Cuban people’ have remained stable throughout time. However, each period emphasises a key historical event that inspires the congress of the Communist Party of Cuba. This determines the nature of the historical heroes that are portrayed in the press. During the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991), heroes are presented as independence fighters that participated in Baraguá, while during the ‘Updating’ (2010-2012) heroes were presented as revolutionary Girón fighters.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The ‘Special Period’ refers to the ‘Special Period in Time of Peace’ that started in 1990 and that lasted until the early 21st century. However, chapters four and five only include the period 1990-1991, between the Party call to debate that preceded the IV Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, and the celebration of the congress itself. Similarly, the period of ‘Updating’ refers to the period of ‘Updating the Cuban Social and Economic Model’ that was announced before the VI Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba and was still ongoing at the time of writing this thesis. However, chapters four and five only refer to the period 2010-2012, between the Party call to debate that preceded the VI Congress of the Party and the celebration of the I National Congress of the Party in 2012.

During the process of ‘Updating’ (2010-2012), there are references to young revolutionaries who fought the Batista dictatorship, either as part of Fidel Castro’s ‘26 July Movement’ (*‘Movimiento 26 de Julio’*), or other rebel groups. Despite the existence of competing anti-Batista movements, *Granma* establishes a chain of equivalence by which all rebels were working towards the 1959 Revolution and, therefore, supporting it. Cuban heroism includes those belonging to the ‘26 July Movement’ (*‘Movimiento 26 de Julio’*) as well as post-revolutionary heroes, such as those who fought the Girón invasion, Cuban internationalists, and ‘the Cuban Five’.

While in the early 1990s internationalist fighters are represented as the incarnation of heroism, during the process of ‘Updating’ (2010-2012) heroism is embodied in the ‘Five Cuban Heroes’, incarcerated in the United States while investigating possible exile-led terrorist plots. The symbolism of the ‘Five Heroes’ is expressed in a hand-written note that they sent to the National Assembly, which was carried into Cuba by a Canadian intellectual. The message thanks people’s solidarity, and repeats one of the main mottos of ‘the Revolution’, *‘Onward to Victory, Always’*:

For the compañeras and compañeros of the National Assembly of People’s Power, thanking them for their constant solidarity with our cause. Onward to Victory, Always!’ (Granma, 18 December 2010)⁴⁶

During the debate, a leader reads the note of the ‘Five Heroes’ and thanks them for setting the example. This excerpt articulates the five prisoners as national heroes, conveying the main roles and values of good Cubans:

[W]e Cubans [los cubanos y las cubanas] ought to really thank Gerardo, Ramón, Fernando, René and Antonio and now, in a moment of battle for the future of the Homeland which requires much determination, much commitment, and the fulfilment of duties, there is probably no clearer, more useful example for all Cubans than these five compañeros. That is the reason why we are now undertaking a process of intense debate that promotes solidarity and collective action in order to save the nation, to save the economy, to carry on; we ought to tell them: Thanks a lot for the inspiration and for the encouragement that you instil on us from those five prisons in the United States. (Granma, 18 December 2010)

⁴⁶ This is the official translation of the motto *‘Hasta la Victoria Siempre’* that appears in the English version of *Granma*. This maxim is attributed to Fidel Castro who, whilst reading aloud Che Guevara’s farewell letter in 1965, misplaced the comma of the original in the message *‘Onward to Victory, Always Homeland or Death!’* [*¡Hasta la Victoria, Siempre Patria o Muerte!’*], giving birth to the motto *‘Onward to Victory, Always! Homeland or Death!’* [*¡Hasta la Victoria Siempre! ¡Patria o Muerte!’*]. This is the motto that was chosen by *Granma* to announce the death of Fidel Castro on 25 November 2016.

4.1.2 – The Working Class

During both congresses, citizens take part in popular assemblies that are organised by ‘the Party’, take place within revolutionary organisations (state-owned working and educational centres) and are led by members of political and mass organisations (Rassí, 22 March 1990). Therefore, there is a degree of elitism inherent to debate that is rarely acknowledged. During the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991), ‘the Cuban people’ are defined as a multi-class conglomerate. According to party leaders, one of the main achievements of ‘the Revolution’ has been the integration of all social classes around the same hegemonic project, eliminating previous inequality and class antagonisms:

The Rectification is not a fleeting episode, but an attitude, a method, a style that must systematically establish itself. This means staying true to our principals and being committed to a constant updating; with the resolution that the duty has been fulfilled, and all possibilities exhausted. This is the way to advance in a society that has eliminated class antagonisms. (Granma, 16 March 1990)

While all hard-working Cubans are welcome in the revolutionary project, the primacy of the working class is clear, as the excerpt below illustrates:⁴⁷

For this process, we count, firstly, on our heroic working class: The Revolution’s bastion of excellence. Faithful to their traditions and their history, they are today the principal protagonists of the Rectification. The working class has the will and the strength to hasten the country’s transformations, as well as the solid political bastions where confusion and weakness can never gain traction.

Together with them, the peasants will contribute their unwavering dedication, including the country’s masses of professionals and experts, the students and the fighters of the FAR. All of our society’s institutions will be there. (Granma, 16 March 1990)

This is visible in the first call to debate (1990), in which ‘the Party’ calls all workers, students, farmers, combatants, housewives and retired people, as well as those Cubans participating in missions abroad. While the underdog is explicitly mentioned in the call, there are no references to other professional groups, such as artists and intellectuals. On the day of the IV Congress, 10 October 1991, *Granma* dedicates two pages to citizens’ messages of support for the Congress.

⁴⁷ See references to ‘the people’ as ‘the underdog’ in Annex II.

Among them are 10 quotes from blue collar workers and peasants, 9 from white collar workers, 3 brigade workers, and 2 students (Shelton et al., 10 October 1991). The weight of the working class can also be observed in the composition of the Communist Party of Cuba, whose militants were made up of 43% blue collar workers, and 62% white collar workers (Lee, 10 October 1991). This shows the multi-class composition of the Communist Party of Cuba. However, it also demonstrates a high representation of working-class members, something remarkable given the selective nature of the process for joining the Party ranks.

‘The Cuban people’ are also presented as multi-racial. The IV Congress of ‘the Party’ focuses on the figure of Antonio Maceo, who is metaphorically referred to as the ‘Bronze Titan’, in reference to his African roots. Similarly, there are also references to the multi-racial composition of those who fought for the abolition of slavery and for national independence in the second half of the 19th century. Specific mentions of race are limited to colonial Cuba, and during the debates that precede the congress there are no specific references to ‘the people’ in terms of race or ethnicity – this can be seen in Annex II. This is coherent with the official view of ‘the Revolution’ as having eliminated not just class, but also racial discrimination. Therefore, debates are race-blind.

During the process of ‘Updating’ (2010-2012), *Granma* frames ‘the Revolution’ as retaining an interclass nature. Blue-collar workers maintain a prominent presence in news stories, appearing in numerous pictures and quotes. However, ‘the Cuban people’ appear as much more professionalised, and there is a clear focus on economists, lawyers, and doctors.⁴⁸ This is coherent with the message of Party leaders, who insist it is the people’s duty to not just to work hard, but also to study.

4.1.3 - The Young People

It is interesting to analyse the way in which *Granma* constructs the identity of younger generations, who have not fought against the Batista dictatorship. The revolutionary belonging of young people does not appear as granted, but as conditional to four elements: (1) an inherited set of desirable roles and values; (2) an emotional involvement with patriotic symbols; (3) knowledge of history and respect for national heroes; and (4) revolutionary reaffirmation. During the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991), young revolutionaries explain their identification with the ‘Generation of the Centenary’ that fought against Batista’s dictatorship through family narrations, in which they remember their parents’ involvement in defensive tasks (Blanco, 3 October 1991). Generational

⁴⁸ See Annex II for further details.

continuity is expressed by the motto '*This is the youth of this Party, of this Revolution*' (Blanco, 3 October 1991). This expression implies an absolute equivalence between 'the Party' and 'the Revolution', as well as a discursive integration of all young Cubans in this chain. This articulation silences alternative identifications, such as being young and un-revolutionary, or revolutionary, yet not identified with the role of 'the Party'. In this sense, the Cuban youth is constructed through a single collective identity.

The familiarity of younger generations with the revolutionary victory is different during the process of 'Updating' (2010-2012). Young people are more detached from the events that led to the 1959 revolution, and might not have any direct relatives involved in the fight. In the press, there is a clear emphasis on staging intergenerational continuity, which consists on the transfer of revolutionary ideals from older to younger Cubans. This is achieved through a series of activities in which members of the Young Communist League meet with veterans of the battle of Girón – commemorated during the VI Congress. These meetings are captured in photos that portray an emotional, personal connection between the youth –who are eager to learn–, and national heroes – who are eager to teach.⁴⁹ The Cuban youth is constructed as naturally revolutionary. This is legitimised by the experience of several generations of Cuban young men who fought for 'the Revolution', such as literacy teachers (*alfabetizadores*), doctors, or internationalists. Therefore, young people are compelled to fulfil their revolutionary duty. Failure to continue the heroic tradition of the Cuban youth is a not just a failure to 'the Revolution', but to Cuban history:

This Revolution is an achievement of the Cuban youth: working class, peasants, students, intellectuals, soldiers; all the youth of all times have had to live and fight. That is why we dedicate the 50-anniversary to our youth. This Revolution will be carried on by the youth, full of optimism and resolute faith in victory. (Granma, 20 December 2010)

Overall, the role of the youth is determined by a historical set of roles and values, which have been bequeathed by 'good Cubans from all generations' (Shelton et al., 10 October 1991). This legacy is not given, but a normative ideal that needs to be actively pursued by young people through hard work, and sacrifice (*Granma*, 16 March 1990).

⁴⁹ The prominence of references to young people, to the Communist Youth and to children can be seen in Annex II.

4.1.4 - Other Categories of ‘the People’

The previous sections illustrate the nationalist and populist articulation of ‘the people’ as nation and as underdog. The historical nature of this articulation means that it cannot be escaped without a betrayal to people’s ancestors. However, not all the articulations of collective identity remain that stable. Throughout time, the Party makes inclusionary calls to include previously marginalised categories of ‘the people’, such as religious people or entrepreneurs.

In the early 1990s, there is an internal rearticulation of Party membership, which becomes both more inclusive and more select. On the one hand, the greatest expansion of belonging is seen in the acceptance of religious citizens in the ranks of ‘the Party’ on the condition that they ‘*give their life for the Revolution*’ (Schlachter et al., 20 June 1990). The compatibility between religion and revolution is given historical legitimacy, as shown in the statutes of the Communist Party of Cuba (founded in 1938), as well as in references to the religious beliefs of revolutionary heroes, such as Frank País or José Antonio Echeverría (Oramas et al., 11 June 1990). The admission of religious people to ‘the Party’ is presented as proof that ‘the Revolution’ fights against all forms of discrimination (Oramas et al., 11 June 1990). However, leaders made clear that being revolutionary has primacy over religious faith. On the other hand, membership to ‘the Communist Party of Cuba’ is restricted to ‘*the best*’ candidates. The election of Party members cannot depend on people’s criteria, but must remain in the hands of a revolutionary elite: ‘*In this sense, it was ratified that the Party is not a mass organisation, but an avant-garde Party, made up of the best sons of this nation of communists*’ (Gabriel Gumá et al., 4 June 1990).

During the process of ‘Updating’ (2010-2012), revolutionary belonging is extended to non-state workers, called ‘*trabajadores por cuenta propia*’. The ‘good people’ are still described as humble, moral and honest citizens who work hard and withstand the temptations of a perverted social order. However, ‘the others’, those with a greater materialistic appetite, can be tolerated as long as they pay taxes and contribute to the maintenance of the socialist economy. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

There is an undeniable crowning moral in those who pocket what they have sweated for. There will always be, of course, those who dream of becoming a millionaire with a silver bathtub and gold taps. We can leave those ones with their ridiculous longing, as long as they contribute with their taxes (including the water for the bathtub) to the improvement of the social and economic bases of the country.

We should not misrepresent the concept that ‘the Cuban’ has got used to life without working. That would be denying those good workers, teachers, scientists, artists and intellectuals that, even among the subversion of predominant values that has taken place over the last few years, have kept fighting and contributing to our socialist cause. (Pérez Betancourt, 2 December 2010)

The official role of ‘the Party’ is to become an empty signifier, able to integrate all Cubans. This is to demonstrate that those who do not belong have decided to exclude themselves on their free will. According to a regional leader, this exclusion implies that they are no longer part of ‘the people’ and their Revolution. The following excerpt shows the equivalence between ‘the Party’, ‘the Revolution’ and ‘the people’. Therefore, it illustrates the categorisation of non-revolutionary citizens as a ‘no-people’. This means that they are excluded from people’s rights, such as debating in assemblies:

As the compañero Jorge Lezcano highlighted in one of his interventions, the goal of the Party is to improve [perfeccionar] the work that it is already happening in the capital, to work with everyone in order to include all the people, ensuring that those who step aside do it out of their own conviction and desire to play no part in our people and our Revolution. (Gabriel Gumá et al., 4 June 1990)

Other articulations of a non-hubristic ‘other’ refer to individuals who have failed to fulfil their revolutionary duties. For instance, the leader of the Federation of University Students (Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios, FEU) ‘otherises’ those students who have no faith in victory, who are not ready, who lack information and do not understand the situation in Cuba (Blanco, 3 October 1991). These people are considered a potential threat to national goals, and should be kept under control. Therefore, the leader of the FEU encourages all students to join mobilisations and volunteer work in order to show their support and reinforce their belonging.

4.2 - The Roles and Values of ‘the Cuban People’

In the previous section, I have explained that the discursive articulation of unity is achieved through the construction ‘the people’ both as an inclusionary and exclusionary category. Having identified the main categories of popular belonging, this section will look at strategies of predication, that is, at the attributions ‘the people’. In this chapter, I have argued that ‘the people’ is constructed through the appeal to collective roles and values. Some of them are so important that they become a condition for belonging. *Granma*’s nationalist and populist articulation of ‘the

people' has provided stability to the revolutionary project, transforming economic and ideological crises into a fight in which 'the people' will inexorably overcome enemy-induced challenges through a set of inherited values, such as patriotism and sacrifice. Therefore, *Granma* constructs a dichotomy where the good people are rewarded for their virtues, while 'the enemy' is punished for its vices. In the following lines, I will present some of the key values that are highlighted in the newspaper.

The nodal values of 'the people' appear stable in the news stories throughout time. These ideal values are expressed in an excerpt from the process of 'Updating' (2010-2012), which focuses on Cubans' ideological and military strength, their sacrifice, and their ability to face any difficulties:

The challenges and the dangers have been great since the triumph of the Revolution and the proclamation of its socialist character, and more especially since the Girón victory, but no difficulties have managed to vanquish us [doblegarnos]. We stand, and will stand, for dignity, for integrity, for courage, for revolutionary strength and for the revolutionary spirit of sacrifice of the Cuban people, who long ago internalised the idea of socialism as the sole guarantee for freedom and independence. (Granma, 20 December 2010)

Being Cuban is constructed in the media as a right acquired by nature (birth), but also by virtue (sacrifice). Virtue and sacrifice guide both the revolutionary fight and hard work. In both periods, Cuba is constructed as a country threatened by internal problems and external dangers. 'The Party' promises to guide 'the people' towards victory, and setting the path that will allow them to win both battles. While success is always taken for granted, a closer look reveals that success is conditional on people's attitude. One of the main values that leads to victory is dignity, according to this quote:

Fully aware, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes embraced the people's dignity himself on 10 October 1868. Owner of men, he handed over to his slaves the property of a Homeland they would need to conquer by the edge of their working machete, inflicting on his family the same sacrifice that he imposed on himself. Cuba was the land of Cubans not only by the natural right of being born there, but also by the virtue of knowing how to give one's life for it. (Lee, 10 October 1991)

In early 1991, 'the Party' starts acknowledging the impact of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Although the 'Special Period' is not mentioned yet, the country is seen as facing 'great obstacles' that could become even greater in the near future (*Granma*, 16 March 1990). A

revolutionary battle is considered essential for defending not only the achievements of ‘the Revolution’, but also the defence of national honour and dignity (Varela Pérez et al., 24 January 1991). Therefore, fighting and winning are constructed in moral terms, and essential for maintaining historical, national, and personal dignity.

Having a dignified attitude appears to be particularly important, since it not only allows citizens to solve problems, but leads to a nemesis, to a reward:

When calling for the preparation of the IV Congress, we do not make promises nor promote false expectations. We call to work hard, to tighten ranks, and to persevere in the unwavering [inclaudicable] line that has allowed us to get here. There will not be an easy road. We face great obstacles and the country should be ready for even more difficult years. But the people need to know, at the same time, that there are solutions to current economic problems, there is a clear strategy to keep moving forward, our Party firmly grips the helm, we are united and well-armed, nothing will be able to discourage us, and we will have a sure reward for our current efforts, especially to the extent that we know how to be worthy of this crucial juncture of the Revolution, and therefore to be dignified. (Granma, 16 March 1990)

Despite difficulties, leaders argue that ‘the Party’ could guide ‘the people’ towards victory. However, solutions would only come as long as Cubans are worthy of their history. It is only through historical legitimacy that ‘the people’ could become dignified. Historical dignity enables Cubans to embrace a series of values that have been passed on from generation to generation, from independence heroes to revolutionary guerrilla fighters, and which guarantee success. Some of these values can be observed in the following excerpt:

In those times of deep tension and danger, the leaders of the Rebel Army kept calm and, serenely, with creativity and audacity, with a deep awareness of their strength, their morale, and their fair cause, got ready to resist, reject the enemy and later undertake the revolutionary counter-offensive. (Varela Pérez et al., 24 January 1991)

Another important value of all Cubans is their capacity to trust. This trust is twofold: a trust in victory, which leads in turn to a trust in the Party as facilitator of this victory. In a circular argument, trust is constructed as reciprocal: ‘the Party’ trusts ‘the people’ to the extent that ‘the people’ trust ‘the Party’. Trust has an intergenerational nature as well. Therefore, younger generations should trust the guidance of older revolutionary fighters, inasmuch as these fighters trust the commitment of the youth to revolutionary duties (Blanco, 3 October 1991).

The calls to the congresses are filled with slogans that convey the main duties of ‘the people’. In the first slogan of the IV Congress, the ideal roles and values of the people are implied, rather than explicit: *‘The future of our Homeland will be an eternal Baraguá’*. However, as months go by, two other slogans take over the pages of *Granma*. Both slogans convey the ideal roles of ‘the people’ in times of crisis. The slogan *‘Resist, Fight, Win’* is often repeated by leaders, and appears in photographs of banners during debates and during the celebration of the Congress (Varela Pérez et al., 24 January 1991; *Granma*, 19 February 1991). Similarly, the slogan *‘Our people grow stronger in difficult times’* is displayed in photographs of the theatre in which the IV Congress is held (*Granma*, 19 February 1991). These slogans construct ‘the Cuban people’ as invincible, historically compelled to battle and to overcome adversity. Therefore, historical praxis appears as unyielding, leaving neither room for surrender, nor defeat.

The content analysis shows that the main roles of ‘the people’ are summarised as unity, work and defence (see Annex II). This implies that unity can only be constructed through a combination of populist and nationalist discourse that present the hard-working underdog as fighting a national battle against internal and external enemies through with dignity, courage and perseverance. The data indicates the extent to which the ideal values and roles of ‘the Cuban people’ cannot be separated from one another, since values instil a collective spirit of work and sacrifice. This spirit can be seen in this quote from Fidel Castro, which was in turn reproduced by brigade workers in a letter addressed to the leader:

The spirit of the contingents is spreading around the working class, and our men and women really take their hat off to a contingent worker because they recognise his extraordinary working capacity, his extraordinary working spirit. (Moisés, 11 April 1990)

In both periods, ‘the Cuban people’ are called on to work hard and to fulfil their productive goals. Workers’ naturalisation of this role can be observed in the following excerpt, in which factory workers repeated Raúl Castro’s emphasis on economic achievements:

‘Without expecting the Guidelines to become solutions in themselves, and aware that our sustainability depends on the right implementation, several workers of this strategic unity of the factory Antillana de Acero highlighted that in the day-to-day work it cannot be overlooked what Raúl has repeatedly said, that “the economic battle is the main task right now”’. (Varela Pérez, 7 December 2010)

Furthermore, workers' enthusiasm is often expressed in a hyperbolic way. For instance, a retired worker is so envious of young and hardworking men that he decides to join a construction team, working over 12 hours a day. Through a chain of equivalence, he represents the ideal working spirit of 'all the people, a spirit that *'multiplies itself'* (*Granma*, 12 June 1991). During the process of 'Updating' (2010-2012), there is an emphasis on a new role: to study. A party leader, Ricardo Alarcon, sums up the normative roles needed for victory as unity, militancy and study:

We ought to study a lot. We ought to behave following that philosophical principle that says that all I know is that I know nothing, that is, with the wisdom of the true sage man, and with militancy, and with unity. (Granma, 18 December 2010)

The 'Five Heroes' symbolise the responsibility of all Cubans to fulfil their duties even in extreme situations. One of the 'Heroes', René, is said to be studying Economics from his prison cell. The reference to this episode is not casual, and contains a clear message: everything is possible with will. If the 'Five Heroes' are able to follow party guidelines from prison, nothing can stop Cubans from doing so (*Granma*, 18 December 2010). The equivalence between historical values, the 'Five Heroes' and 'the people' implies that if the latter does not follow the heroes' example, they are not deserving of their history. They are, in a way, excluded from historical deservedness, one of the main nodal points that articulates collective identity. This can be seen in the following excerpt from Ricardo Alarcón's intervention:

As I said yesterday, I think that it is not the Five who need to thank us, but we who should thank them instead; because if it is possible, compañeros, not to be vanquished, to resist, to be able to generate ideas, on top of studying an academic degree isolated, in the worse conditions, separated from their family, from their friends, if they can do it all by themselves, what can we not achieve all together? If we are not able to do it, we really do not deserve our history. (Granma, 18 December 2010)

Finally, participation in Party-led events is constructed as a clear demonstration of popular support for 'the Revolution'. The press articulates a discursive equivalence between participation, support, and victory. The three roles, as well as the connection between them, appears as a truism, as something self-evident which can only be called into question by 'the enemy'. Therefore, popular mobilisation reinforces belonging (*Granma*, 17 March 1990). While participation is essential, 'the Party' calls for the highest degree of support and equivalence: the internalisation of party guidelines and values, such as socialism (Machado, 31 May 1990). Following a circular fallacy, workers often memorise leaders' messages, then repeat them in front

of leaders. The co-optation of the official message can be seen in this headline: ‘*Faced with the ‘special period’ challenge, communists ratify their will to win*’ (Calzadilla et al., 17 January 1991). This mechanism stresses people’s revolutionary belonging through the naturalisation of Party messages (*Granma*, 17 March 1990).

4.3 - Articulating ‘the Enemy’: The Frontiers of Collective Belonging

The construction of the Cuban revolutionary project, and of the revolutionary new man, is challenged by the existence of an enemy that hinders the fulfilment of the hegemonic project. A discourse theoretical analysis suggests that populist and nationalist articulations of ‘the people’ against ‘the enemy’ are essential for establishing the frontiers of collective belonging. While the problems of ‘the Revolution’ are mainly attributed to the interference of a foreign enemy’, they are not only externalised. During debates, there is great emphasis on discussing problems with workers and militants through the institutional channels provided by ‘the Party’. However, the analysis shows that internal problems cannot be completely solved in an institutional manner. In practice, people’s problems surpass the capacity of the Party to deal with them. This is the pre-condition that sparks a populist, anti-elitist discourse that sees bureaucracy as the enemy of ‘the people’ and, by analogy, of the Revolution. This section focuses on strategies of nomination: who is the enemy of the Cuban people? In the following lines, I will discuss the dual categorisation of an internal and an external enemy, which is both implicit and explicit in *Granma*’s discourse.

4.3.1 - The Internal Enemy

The internal enemy was constructed as having its roots in both subjective and structural distortions. During the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991), the official discourse constructs an internal, subjective enemy that frustrates ‘Party’ efforts to overcome economic difficulties. The subjective enemy is constructed as workers who have broken the mutual trust between ‘the people’ and ‘the Party’ by stealing resources. These internal enemies are presented as ‘*anti-social elements*’ and ‘*delinquents*’ (Oramas, 20 August 1990) who should be punished. The construction of minor delinquents as an internal enemy, rather than an ‘other’ that can be rehabilitated, can be seen in the following quote from Rafael Reyes, a blue-collar worker: ‘*We should evaluate unlawful [actividades delictivas] activities as the main enemy of the Revolution*’ (Gabriel Gumá et al., 31 January 1991). The internal enemy is presented as damaging collective economic interests and,

therefore, collaborating directly or indirectly with the goals of ‘the enemy’. Therefore, delinquents should be charged for popular treason:

The counter-revolutionary and anti-social elements that incorporate its [the enemy's] meagre reserve, should be warned that serving at this time as imperialist cowards is equivalent to becoming the greatest traitors in Cuban history, and the Law and the people will consider them as such. (Granma, 16 March 1990)

The focus on delinquency is also a key discursive element during the process of ‘Updating’ (2010-2012). For instance, an opinion writer considers that the Cuban economy has suffered from a chronic lack of efficacy, as well as from loopholes that have enabled workers to break the law and steal from the state (Pérez Betancourt, 2 December 2010). This discourse suggests that theft and delinquency manifest themselves in everyday citizens’ behaviour, but have in fact structural roots. The focus on individual, subjective misbehaviour hides the fact that corruption takes place at a structural level, and that citizens are only the point of the iceberg of a widespread misuse of national resources.

The Party press constructs socialism as democratic, but different from bourgeois democracy. While the first ensures social justice, and a class-inclusive social participation, the latter is reduced to electoral speculation and demagoguery. Socialism is shown as a top-down and bottom-up process mediated by revolutionary institutions that connected ‘the people’ with the leaders: ‘the Party’, cadres, militants, the state, the Popular Power (*‘El Poder Popular’*), the Youth Communist League (*‘Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas’*, UJC), Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (*‘Comités para la Defensa de la Revolución’*, CDR), the Central Union of Cuban Workers (*‘Central de Trabajadores Cubanos’*, CTC) and other mass organisations. Whatever reinforces this democratic articulation, is defined as progressive. On the contrary, whatever separates ‘the people’ from the leaders is conceived as reactionary. This is the case of bureaucratic obstacles that interrupt direct dialogue between ‘the Party’ and ‘the people’. Another structural element that damages the revolutionary project is the excess of formalities, defined as a wide range of dealings, such as meetings or reports that diverted bureaucrats and workers from fulfilling their productive goals.

During the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991), workers and delegates criticise the utility of trying to solve problems through bureaucratic speeches and discourses, rather than action (Rojas Aguilera et al., 19 June 1990). This idea is developed by a regional party leader, who denounces the excessive focus on formalities, which make cadres more responsive to the Party than to citizens:

We exhaust ourselves with formal, tedious, monitored reports, which can be revised three or four times. It is more important to outline the goals without set phrases, to focus on specific goals, without so much methodological precision. In the evaluation phase, due to fulfilling the documents and the methodology, the núcleos do not fulfil their main political-ideological function. What matters is not the [administrative] act, but the work that is done. (Rojas Aguilera et al., 19 June 1990)

The excess of bureaucratic procedures and formalities are seen as serving the interests of a bureaucratic class that has become too accustomed to serve the interests of Party elites, rather than working for people's wellbeing. This class is described as living in an idealised, utopian Revolution that is disconnected from citizens' needs and demands. By doing so, this detachment damages the revolutionary project and serves the goals of 'the enemy'.

During the process of 'Updating' (2010-2012), internal structural problems are more visible in the press. These mistakes are attributed to the lack of experience of 'the Party' in building a sustainable socialist model, as well as to its excessive idealism. 'The Party' wrongly assumes that all citizens deserved the same benefits, whether they contribute to the economy or take advantage of it.

What remains is the satisfaction of knowing that the fight for national wellbeing has prevailed, and there is overwhelming proof of what we have achieved; just like there is proof of the loopholes and lack of experience that have made us fall into structural mistakes and into idealism, the latter inspired by the idea that we were all equal in the new social balance, whether we contributed or not. Any older journalist can testify that we have been talking and writing about economic planning, cost-effectiveness, productivity, investment, and saving in Cuba for a long time. What we cannot be proud of is the lack of implementation of mechanisms that would guide us towards a much-needed efficacy [...]. (Pérez Betancourt, 2 December 2010)

The excerpt above shows that journalists can recognise the structural roots of citizens' problems, but cannot question the role of 'the Party' in dealing with them. While problems are acknowledged, citizens must believe in the mediation of 'the Party' for improving the situation. Therefore, when Party measures appear as insufficient, criticism is addressed to procedural elements, such as deficient implementation, rather than to the measures themselves.

4.3.2 - The External Threat

In *Granma*, unity has been historically presented as the sole guarantee for victory against ‘the enemy’. This argument is backed by José Martí’s creation of a single party in 1892, seen as the element that integrated different strands of ‘the people’ together in the fight against the Spanish colonial rule. The following excerpt from *Granma* quotes a text that Martí published in the magazine *Patria*, in 1982. In this article, Martí stresses the importance of national unity for overcoming external threats:

Legitimately carrying on the Revolutionary Party of José Martí, our Party represents nowadays the idea of a wide national unity in the face of a powerful adversary: ‘Our enemy’, said Martí, ‘obeys a plan: to find us, to disperse us, to divide us, to suffocate us. That is why we obey another plan: to show ourselves in all our stature, to tighten up, to join together, to mock the enemy, and finally make our Homeland free. Plan against plan’. (*Granma*, 16 March 1990)

The external enemy is articulated in *Granma* as a perennial, ubiquitous threat that longs for the defeat of a collective ‘us’: ‘the Revolution’, socialism, and ‘the people’ (Pérez Betancourt, 2 December 2010). Therefore, it is a hubristic enemy whose explicit role is to destroy the national and revolutionary unity that guarantees peoples’ freedom, independence, and dignity. While the external enemies of ‘the Revolution’ are multiple, the United States becomes the empty signifier that conveys all threats. In order to destroy the collective project, ‘the enemy’ has used violence, but also costly defamation campaigns aimed at sparking popular dissatisfaction within the Island:

In the new economic times to come, the sworn enemy insists on being an obstacle and, besides the blockade and other sophistries that cost millions to the country, opens its pockets and pays twice as much for traitors’ opinions and campaigns that have been calling for a perfect world –which does not even exist in movies– for a long time, for disenchantment, for advocating the exaltation of a mild scepticism “that would help to face the frustration” that, it claims, is consuming us. (Pérez Betancourt, 2 December 2010)

The imperialist project of the United States threatens the independence of previous colonies such as Cuba. In the 1990s, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the US invasion of Panama contributed to a feeling of insecurity that is palpable in the press. This is clear in the following excerpt, which was published in commemoration to *Granma*’s 26th anniversary, only a few days

before the IV Congress. The paper talks about '[a] more aggressive imperialism', which will be faced through 'a stronger and more unwavering Revolution', and continues:

A massive and despicable campaign is being unleashed against our Homeland. Our people has never expected praise from the empire, and we have always found support in our strengths in order to resist, to vanquish and to develop ourselves, united around the Party that our Commander in Chief leads. (Granma, 3 October 1991)

While imperialism and capitalism are constructed as equivalential enemies, it is rare to find explicit accusations against global political and economic powers. The following example constitutes, therefore, an exception:

To the nonsense of those who within the Soviet Union affirm that the socialist Revolution is a historic error, we reply that –as a social development need and supreme reason– the Revolution opens to men the opportunity of a destiny that does not depend on governing elites that represent economic power groups, but on their own intelligence, conscience and hard work. This is what reinforces our certainty in the capacity of self-improvement and authentic democratic renewal of socialism. (Calzadilla et al., 17 January 1991)

The United States incarnates capitalism, which is constructed in a Manichaeian opposition to socialism. Socialism is articulated as naturally superior, but its potential benefits are hindered by both external negative influences and internal mistakes. Socialism becomes an empty signifier, as something that does not exist as such, and which needs to be constantly experimented with. The 'emptiness' of socialism allows it to become nodal, and to create its own equivalential chain around the ideas of national independence, social justice, and democracy. The excerpt below exemplifies the construction of socialism as a superior and equivalential signifier:

Socialism needs to be constructed, it is a contradictory process in which the real and the possible, the objective and the subjective, the internal and the external dialectally interact; it requires experimentation and improvement [perfeccionamiento]. Understanding why socialism is objectively superior to capitalism and generates the appropriate actions is the basis of the subjective factor, but this does not mean that nowadays world economic development should be necessarily linear, perfectly and gradually ascendant. There can obviously be cases of temporary stagnation or even decrease, but that does not prove that socialism is inferior to the capitalist system.

There are many elements that are external to the system and which can condition these situations, regardless of mistakes.

For us, there clearly is no possible alternative to socialism, not only for what its practical construction has demonstrated in our country, but because we know perfectly well that the only alternative would be a society divided into antagonist classes which, besides meaning the loss of national sovereignty, would oblige us to put all the weight of the situation in one part of society: those who would not own the means of production. Only socialism can guarantee social justice, one of the fundamental and essential goals of the socialist democracy. (Machado, 31 May 1990)

The comparison between Cuba and capitalist countries serves a binary goal. First, as Cuban problems are geographically expanded and universalised, internal responsibility for those problems is downgraded. Second, it allows for a juxtaposition between the merits of the Cuban system, and those of capitalist countries. The Cuban economic model is constructed as leading universal progress and guaranteeing the full dignity of human beings.

It is interesting to analyse the discursive construction of ‘the enemy’, which opposes foreign defeat to national victory. Through a metonymy, Baraguá and Girón (the historical events that inspire the IV and the VI Congresses) come to represent a nemesis, a proof that history punishes ‘the enemy’, while rewarding Cuba. These two elements can be observed in the quote below, which corresponds to a brigade worker. According to him, the role of workers is:

‘[...] to be intransigent on the face of wrongdoing, to ask those who do not comply, whether a manager or a compañero who works by our side, to be good and efficient workers, wherever they are, and to have their rifles lubricated and ready for those who threaten us 90-miles away, who try to attack us; to give them the greatest Girón that history has ever given anybody in the world. [...] Once he had expressed with emotion that there is a single party in this country, which is the Party of the working class, of us, workers, that nobody can impose any other alternative, and that the Party led by our Commander in Chief [Fidel] is what leads us towards a truly socialist model, people stood up and clapped, and then came another contribution. (Moisés, 11 April 1990)

Since national belonging is restricted to those living on the Island, or serving in foreign missions, the exile community in Miami is rarely mentioned in *Granma* during debates. The example below

shows a rare explicit reference to a minority group of anti-revolutionary exiles, who are seen as influencing US policies against Cuba:

Everyone must be wondering what is going on, and how it relates to the twists and turns of the United States policy. Meanwhile, what has been disseminated so far demonstrates that this country, even dissimulating with a gentle rhetoric, essentially keeps the usual policies and behaves as a global gendarme. Regarding our relations with the United States, there are no signs of the slightest will to rectify its policies against Cuba, not even to eliminate its most irrational aspects. It is obvious that, in this matter, the will of a reactionary and powerful minority that supports the anti-Cuban mafia still prevails.

The US not only disregards the overwhelming demands of 187 countries that are requesting the end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade against our country, but in 2010 it toughened its application and included Cuba again in its lists of spurious countries, through which they claim the right to typify and slander sovereign States, justifying punitive actions and even acts of aggression. (Granma, 20 December 2010)

The courtesy of the Obama administration is acknowledged in the excerpt above. Nevertheless, good manners are articulated as just another strategy to gain popular sympathy. The pages of the paper still described the United States, and the Obama administration, as a hubristic, arrogant enemy that continued to support damaging policies against Cuba –against the will of all other nations in the world.

Implicit references to an external enemy are persistent in *Granma*. The clearest example is the historic remembrance of Baraguá and Girón in the IV and VI congresses of ‘the Party’. The congresses pay homage to national victories against a foreign enemy, whether Spanish colonialism or American imperialism. Implicit references to ‘the enemy’ also appear in the logo of the Communist Party of Cuba. The logo, printed in red, identifies all news stories related to the IV and VI congresses. During the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991), the logo explicitly represents ‘the people’ ready to fight ‘the enemy’, raising their weapons whilst carrying both the proletarian and the Cuban independence flags. The logo conveys a chain by which ‘the Party’, ‘the Revolution’, the nation, socialism and the working class are united in their fight against a foreign enemy. Therefore, it represents a dual articulation of the people as nation and as underdog.

During the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991), ‘the enemy’ appears as a ubiquitous threat that requires a ubiquitous defence. During the IV Congress, Raúl Castro, Minister of the Cuban Revolutionary

Armed Forces (*'Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias'*, FAR), Abelardo Colome, Minister of Internal Affairs, and some other delegates are absent. A Party leader explains that Raúl, Abelardo and other *'compañeros'* had a more important task to fulfil: safeguarding the country – from an implied enemy. While details are not provided, their absence reinforces the sense of a pervasive threat and highlights leaders' sacrifice and commitment to defence (De La Osa, 11 October 1991). In the following excerpt, the sky, the coastline and the land of the Island stand for the limits of the country in a synecdoche that reinforces national unity and independence:

[Lazo] [e]xplained that an important number of those delegates that represent the communists of our glorious Revolutionary Armed Forces and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, including the chiefs of the armies, were not present because, from their respective unities and with their compañeros, the generals, chiefs, officers, sergeants and soldiers, guard the sky, the coastline and the land of the Homeland. (De la Osa, 11 October 1991)

During the process of 'Updating' (2010-2012), 'the enemy' is implicit in references to the 'Five Cuban Heroes', who are being unfairly held prisoner in the United States (*Granma*, 18 December 2010). I have found implicit references to 'the enemy' in the booklet that contains the 'guidelines of the economic and social policies of the Party and the Revolution'. The book cover shows an assemblage of Cuban flags waving in the wind (*Granma*, 9 November 2010). A close analysis reveals that it is a picture of the 'Mount of flags' at the 'José Martí Anti-Imperialist Square', an iconic part of the Malecón that faces the Embassy United States –the Interest Section at that time. In 2006, the Cuban government set up 138 black flags, each representing a year of national struggle against the Empire.⁵⁰ According to this account, the anti-imperialist fight dated back to 1868, when the independence wars started. Those 138 years establish an equivalential chain between Spanish colonialism and US imperialist rule on Cuba, stressing the historical continuity of the foreign threat and of people's fight.⁵¹

⁵⁰ In January 2005, George W. Bush's administration decided to set up an electronic billboard outside the United States Interest Section (now US Embassy), disseminating political messages. Only one month later, Fidel Castro's government set up the 'Wall of flags' [Monte de las Banderas] right in front of the billboard, 138 black flags with a white star representing each year of the Cuban anti-imperialist fight. The flags partially covered the US propaganda messages, weakening their intended effect. The billboard was taken off by the Obama administration in 2009, yet the flag poles stayed in place.

⁵¹ This revolutionary fight includes the United States occupation of the Island during the Cuban Independence War, which granted them direct political control of Cuba as set out in the Platt Amendment in 1901, abolished in 1934.

4.3.3 - Internalisation versus Externalisation

The Cuban national press articulates an externalisation of causality by which the origin of problems lies beyond the geographical frontier of the country, and the political limits of ‘the Revolution’. During the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991), the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the US threat are constructed as external, ‘objective problems’ whose solution escapes the reach of ‘the Party’. According to Fidel Castro, the adoption of Soviet-type economic planning brought about erroneous economic concepts, structures and methods of work (especially from 1976 to 1985) that diverted the revolutionary path and fostered negative behaviours and attitudes in political structures, which affected administrative cadres and workers (*Granma*, 2 July 1990). This discourse relates to a ‘not invented here’ fallacy by which imported ideas are rejected, appealing at the same time to a set of truly national ways of doing things.

The ‘Special Period’ serves as a unique scapegoating strategy for externalising problems and overloading responsibility on ‘objective’ external factors, rather than the internal management of the crisis. The ‘Special Period in Time of Peace’ appears as a Party-led hegemonic campaign to manage internal struggles. In this sense, the ‘Special Period’ becomes an empty signifier by which both problems and responsibility can be discursively externalised, articulating ‘the Party’ as the solution, rather than the problem.

The externalisation of problems during the process of ‘Updating’ (2010-2012) is more heterogeneous, and combines a series of pre-existing factors, such as the US embargo, the global economic and financial crisis, or environmental disasters (Peláez, 10 November 2010). While *Granma* presents the enemy as being both internal and external, the content analysis indicates that externally-born problems receive more mentions, and are further developed in news stories.⁵² A party leader makes only vague references to internal problems in this excerpt:

On the other hand, he [Machado Ventura] highlighted that the Cuban economy has been affected by internal factors such as low efficacy, the decapitalisation of the productive bases and infrastructures, and the ageing and stagnation of the population growth. (Puig Meneses et al., 15 November 2010)

The externalisation of problems also applies to internal deficiencies, which are called ‘subjective problems’. Internal problems are discursively externalised as originating in: (1) the uncritical

⁵² A table with the different categories of ‘the enemy’ that appear in *Granma* in both periods of analysis can be seen in Annex II.

adoption of Soviet structures and ideas, which has led to a bureaucratic chaos, and (2) deviations produced by a David-versus-Goliath-like battle with the most powerful enemy in world history (*Granma*, 20 December 2010). These ‘subjective problems’ are what ‘the Party’ attempts to tackle during citizens’ participation in debates, and during congresses. While debates become a Party-led attempt to deal with internal problems, such problems are articulated through a populist externalisation of responsibility. Overall, the ‘Rectification’ and the ‘Updating’ of socialism are based on a genetic fallacy by which foreign ideas lead to mistakes.

In a speech, Raúl Castro wonders who is to be held responsible for Cuba’s mistakes, for the failure of the ‘Rectification’ process. The problem, according to him, is both internal and external. From an external perspective, the problem is the enemy’, the pervasive threat that prevents ‘the Revolution’ from fully constituting itself. From an internal perspective, the problem does not lay in Fidel Castro’s management of crises, but in those unable to follow the leader’s strict discipline and high moral standards; in those who have applauded discourses and repeated slogans, but have failed to implement the necessary measures (Varela Pérez, 7 December 2010).

4.4 - The Roles and Values of ‘the Enemy’

The previous section has analysed the strategies of nomination by which *Granma* identified the enemies of ‘the people’. In this section, I will focus on the strategies of predication by which the newspaper explains the nature of ‘the enemy’. In an excerpt from the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991), the role of ‘the people’ is inspired by Maceo’s words in Baraguá, a succinct ‘*NO!*’ to ‘the enemy’. Cuban citizens are compelled to fight for ‘the Revolution’, since surrender implies a betrayal to all Cubans who have died for national independence, as well as to those who have fought for peace and development all over world.

The values and roles of ‘the enemy’ are constructed as being opposed to those of ‘the Cuban people’. While ‘the Cuban people’ defended ‘the Revolution’, socialism, and national independence, the role of the United States is to destroy those achievements. While Cuban leaders develop the economy, ‘the enemy’ damages it. While ‘the Revolution’ protects the humble people, capitalist countries benefit only the rich. While Cuba is interested in protecting people’s health, ‘the enemy’ is planning to purposely introduce epidemics into the country (Pagés et al., 25 February 1991). The opposition is also expanded to less central topics, such as environmental protection.

The articulation of ‘the enemy’ highlights its lack of moral authority, while Cubans remain unsoiled. In this excerpt, ‘the Cuban people’ are called on to oppose a hubristic and immoral enemy, whose opinion lacks any legitimacy:

This is the moment to stand up, like the Bronze Titan in Baraguá, to say: No! We will not renounce to the revolution, to socialism, to Leninism and to internationalism. We will not disown of our achievements, the most human, fair and dignified [digna] ones that have ever been achieved on Cuban ground.⁵³ We will never surrender to the arrogance and high-headedness of Yankee imperialism, nor will we make any concession seeking for indulgence or charity. We will never betray our glorious dead, from the Demajagua until today. We will not commit treason under any circumstances towards our brotherly peoples of Latin America nor the fight of the whole Third World for its right to peace and development. Whatever it is that the ringleaders of imperialism and their ideologists think and say about our country, our society and our system, we do not give a damn about it [nos importa un bledo]. They completely lack the morality to judge socialism. Harlots cannot brag nor speak like vestal virgins [Las meretrices no pueden presumir ni hablar como vírgenes vestales]. (Granma, 16 March 1990)

‘The enemy’ is constructed as a hubristic Goliath that is furious, arrogant, and powerful by nature. However, despite the magnitude of the enemy, Cuba aspires to historical grandeur. In the face of foreign threats, Fidel and Raúl Castro consider that Cuba is ready for a ‘People’s War’ (*Guerra de todo el Pueblo*), which will guarantee victory in a future confrontation with the United States (Pagés et al., 26 February 1991; Veloz et al., 31 January 1991). Cuba’s exceptionalism is clear in the following headline: ‘No people are readier’ (Pagés et al., 26 February 1991). As Fidel Castro asserts in this news story, ‘we [Cubans] are glorious in a historical perspective’. Therefore, ‘the Cuban people’ are morally, emotionally and mentally ready to resist, as shown by their accumulation of historic victories:

[Fidel] explained that these difficulties coincide with the existence of a stronger, more arrogant, conceited enemy, more rabid against us due to the strength that our people has demonstrated despite the economic problems that they have faced, which has been a big test and a big challenge. (Pagés, 26 February 1991)

⁵³ The ‘revolution’ is written in lower case in the original excerpt.

The roles of ‘the enemy’ are discursively opposed to the achievements of the Cuban Revolution. For instance, Fidel Castro asserts during the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991) that capitalism is not able to solve any social problems, from health and education to inequality, drugs, prostitution and child poverty. These are the areas in which Cuba excels. The role of capitalist countries can be seen in this excerpt:

‘They are more demented and more depraved every day, there is more violence, more vice, more Third World exploitation, more sacking, more brain theft’, highlighted the Commander in Chief. (Varela Pérez et al., 24 January 1991)

‘The enemy’ is also evoked in the construction of people’s roles, such as fight and defence (Pagés, 26 February 1991). These roles appear in slogans during the calls to debate, such as ‘*Socialism or Death!*’ (‘*Socialismo o Muerte*’), ‘*Homeland or Death!*’ (‘*Patria o Muerte*’) or ‘We will win!’ (‘*Venceremos*’). These slogans construct death as preferable to defeat, and appeal to an implicit enemy. However, death will not be necessary, since a final victory awaits. The pervasiveness of these slogans during the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991) led Fidel Castro to suggest that ‘the people’ had internalised them, and were naturally fulfilling their revolutionary roles (*Granma*, 2 July 1990). Nevertheless, the process by which the internalisation of roles and values took place remains unexplained in the newspaper.

4.4.1 - Historical and Geographical Equivalence

In the early 1990s, as the Soviet Union was no longer capable of preventing the United States from expanding their economic, political and military power, Fidel Castro asserted that Cuba would protect Third World countries from the hubristic, immoral, arrogant and obtrusive enemy (Pagés, 26 February 1991; *Granma*, 16 March 1990). One of the ‘the Revolution’s’ main achievements is Cuba’s solidarity with developing countries. Through a geographical chain of equivalence, ‘the Cuban people’ are constructed as supporting the most ‘*human, fair and honourable project*’ that has ever existed in Cuba, Latin America, and the Third World, fighting for national independence, peace, and development (*Granma*, 16 March 1990).

The articulation of geographical equivalence allows the newspaper to extend the threat of ‘the enemy’ beyond Cuba. The official discourse considers that the whole world is united by the dangerous goals of the United States, the imperial and capitalist power *par excellence*. The United States is accused of promoting terrorism (supporting violent groups of Cuban exiles), as opposed to Cuban heroes, who fight against it.

During the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991), the United States is presented as willingly slaughtering hundreds of thousands of people in other countries, producing real carnage, and overrunning the United Nations and the Soviet Union’s efforts for peace. The United States invasion of Panama in 1989 and the First Gulf War serve as metaphors of what ‘the enemy’ could do in Cuba if ‘the people’ were to lose their unity and strength (Pagés, 26 February 1991).

During the process of ‘Updating’ (2010-2012), all countries are constructed as equivalent in so much as they have to endure the consequences of a capitalist, global financial crisis. Capitalism is hyperbolised, deemed responsible for global problems such as famine, and drug and human trafficking. It becomes, therefore, a direct threat to human survival. According to this narrative, capitalism is able to produce a ‘worldwide hecatomb’ and the ‘extermination of the human species’ through environmental ‘depravation’ and nuclear wars. The sinister global role of ‘the enemy’, embodied by United States capitalism, is opposed to the integrity of Cuba, a country that is able to save humankind through socialism. As a journalist puts it, *‘[i]n the face of such dark contrasts, Cuba shines with its own light’* (Arturo, 8 January 2011).

For 500 years, from Hatuey to Fidel, our people has shed too much blood to accept the dismantling of what we have achieved at the price of so much sacrifice (Applause). We should remind those who cherish such unfounded hopes what I expressed in this same Parliament on 1 August 2009: I quote: ‘I was not elected President to restore capitalism in Cuba, nor to give the Revolution away’. I was elected to defend, maintain and continue improving [perfeccionando] socialism, not to destroy it’, (Applause). (Granma, 20 December 2010)

In the excerpt above, socialism is constructed as inherently positive and, therefore, eternally ‘irrevocable’ and ‘irreversible’ (Arturo, 8 January 2011). However, a hypothetical transition to capitalism is seen as equivalent to historic defeat; a defeat to all generations of Cubans that have fought for 500 hundred years, from the aboriginal Indian Hatuey to Fidel Castro.⁵⁴ The combination of historical and geographical equivalence is essential for extending revolutionary values beyond the national context:

Without being chauvinist, we must wonder: ‘in the end, what would have become of the Third World without Cuba’s example of resistance’? Well, it is not enough to

⁵⁴ There are a few instances, however, in which capitalism was not completely demonised. For instance, Raúl Castro called on leaders to learn from positive capitalist experiences (*Granma*, 20 December 2010).

resist, but to win with exemplary virtue and work, with daily heroism. This is the motto of the Guidelines. Work and virtue at all levels. (Rojas, 25 November 2010)

Overall, Cuba is historically articulated as a model of resistance for developing countries, surviving the Girón invasion and the disintegration of the Soviet Union against all odds. Cubans are, therefore, historically compelled to work heroically towards resistance and victory, as the following excerpt illustrates:

4.6 - The Unifying Power of History

In the previous section, I have argued that the articulation of historical and geographical equivalence has been essential for constructing the Revolution as a great achievement in world history. However, the relevance of history in legitimising the revolutionary project is so prominent that deserves more attention. In this section, I look at argumentative strategies – such as fallacies– that establish the historical continuity and legitimisation of the revolutionary project. I do this by looking at argumentation strategies The analysis of *Granma*’s coverage of the IV and the VI Congresses of the Communist Party of Cuba reveals the importance of the nation as a nodal point that institutes the revolutionary project with discursive legitimacy through a reification of history. This can be observed in the historical inspiration of both congresses, as well as in the use of systematic historical references, starting with Party calls to debate. The data suggests that historical remembrance is a key discursive strategy facilitated the legitimisation of the Party in the light of past battles. Battles and heroes are ubiquitous in the paper, constantly evoked in the name of towns, squares or monuments.⁵⁵

The IV Congress of the CCP is inspired by Antonio Maceo’s intransigence towards Spanish colonial leaders in Baraguá, rejecting the 1878 Pact of Zanjón and deciding instead to continue the fight for national independence. Therefore, discursive references to Baraguá are used to remind readers of the right values of ‘the people’ in the face of danger, fixing history as a nodal point. This articulation is visible in the following example, in which the pre-headline sets a historical precedent, ‘*With the example of Baraguá*’, and the headline connects the independence fights with socialism: ‘*When we defend Socialism, we do it because we believe in men, in the people*’ (*Granma*, 19 February 1991).

⁵⁵ For instance, Santiago de Cuba is always referred to as a ‘heroic city’. This is an honorific title that the inhabitants of some Soviet cities received for their participation in heroic battles during II World War, and which was introduced into Cuba given Santiagueros’ historical support for ‘the Revolution’ (exemplified in the Fidel Castro’s 1953 attack on the Moncada Barracks).

The IV Congress starting date, the 10 October 1991, has historical relevance on its own. This date commemorates the anniversary of Céspedes' 1868 Cry of Yara, which represented the beginning of the independence process (*Granma*, 12 June 1991). Céspedes' decision to emancipate slaves appears as a unifying symbolic event that gave rise to Cubanness, that is, to Cuban national identity. The institution of collective identity, in turn, enabled the beginning of the Independence process. This is explained in the following excerpt:

The bells' call for independence on the 10 October, accompanied by the decision to emancipate slaves, is at the roots of the Cuban integrity, turned into a Nation. [...] Céspedes, along with the rest of the mambí leaders, addressed the men who, in a magnificent picture of the nascent integration of white people, black slaves, landowners, small landlords, peasants and black freed slaves, united themselves for the historical occasion. (Oramas, 10 October 1991)

The call to the IV Congress in *Granma* is accompanied by a front-page illustration of the historical leaders that should inspire popular debates. Independence war heroes José Martí and Antonio Maceo are placed at the centre of the image, with Marx and Lenin on the sides. These four heroes are arranged in the shape of a cross. The centrality of national leaders and the prominence of a big Cuban revolutionary flag at the top of the image suggests a historical continuity between the Independence wars and 'the Revolution', as well as the compatibility of both causes with Cuban socialism. The rest of the image represents different drawings of people surrounding the four leaders, portraying a revolutionary project that has the support of farmers, blue-collar workers, the military and professionals, both men and women.

While historical symbols such as Baraguá and Girón, the Cuban flag, and the logo of the Communist Party of Cuba can be found throughout the coverage of the debates, historical symbolism is particularly visible during the coverage of the Congresses. The slogan of the IV Congress (1991), '*to save the Homeland, the Revolution, Socialism*', encompasses the strongest articulation of collective identity. Homeland evokes the 1959 Revolution's fulfilment of national independence; Revolution appears as the guarantee of national sovereignty, but also of people's power, while socialism represents social justice.

The slogan appeared for the first time in June 1991, when 'the Party' announced the exact date of the Congress (*Granma*, 12 June 1991). However, there were earlier variations, such as Fidel's words in February 1991: '*There is something to defend here, which is called Revolution, socialism, and national independence*' (*Granma*, 25 February 1991). The slogan of the IV Congress is attributed to Fidel Castro (Shelton et al., 10 October 1991) and reproduced in

peoples' messages of support.⁵⁶ For instance, the slogan becomes the sub-headline of a news story that narrates people's messages of support to the guidelines under the headline '*More convinced and united than ever. To save the Homeland, the Revolution, Socialism*' (Shelton et al., 10 October 1991). In another example, three delegates from the same family assert that their revolutionary commitment bounds them together more than their shared ancestry. '*The three of them would have a common denominator that unites "more than blood, which is our sacred duty: to save the Homeland, the Revolution, Socialism"*' (Camacho Albert, 5 October 1991).

An opinion writer expresses the equivalence between the motto '*to save the Homeland, the Revolution and Socialism*' and Céspedes' declaration of the independence in 1868 (Lee, 10 October 1991). By a process of catachresis, 'the Cry of Yara' ('*El Grito de Yara*'), the jingle of the Demajagua's bell ('*La Campana de Demajagua*') and the emblem of the Congress fade into the same battle cry, a cry that is essential for survival:

Today the Cuban people's Party is meeting under the emblem of saving Homeland, the Revolution and Socialism. That is the emblem of all Cubans that feel in the depths of their revolutionary soul, just like Martí did, the jingle of Céspedes' bell, which taught us all how to live. (Calzadilla et al., 10 October 1991)

The main slogan appears on the front page of *Granma* on the first day of the Congress, reminding 'the people' of the right attitude in the face of the 'Special Period': '*All together and forward. Our most sacred duty: to save the Homeland, the Revolution, and Socialism*' (*Granma*, 1 September 1991). The front page is made up of an amalgamation of symbols: the slogan, the Demajagua bell, a picture of José Martí and Karl Marx and, lower down, different pictures of 'the best Cuban people': peasants, industrial workers, scientists, and combatants. Furthermore, a reproduction of the Demajagua bell stood in the theatre during the sessions, reinforcing the historical continuity between the battle for independence, the 1959 Revolution, and the struggles of the 'Special Period' (Oramas, 10 October 1991).

During the IV Congress, it is the bell that calls 'the people' to fight, as shown in the headline '*The Demajagua bell. Calling to combat for the Homeland*' (Oramas, 10 October 1991). Through personification, the jingle of the bell becomes the first voice that vibrated in the Congress, the voice of history (Cabrera Álvarez, 11 October 1991). The personification of the Demajagua bell

⁵⁶ There is a booklet entitled *To save the Homeland, the Revolution and Socialism* that gathers Fidel's speech at the Central Act for the XXX Anniversary of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution ('*Comités para la Defensa de la Revolución*'), on 28 September 1990.

and, therefore, of history, is recurrent both in opinion articles and in news stories. An example of *brujería poética*, or poetic witchcraft, can be found on the day of the Congress in a news story that extols the white star of the Cuban flag, symbol of independence. The symbolism of the star allows for an imagined conversation between all Cuban people and history, in which all Cubans promise to follow the national path of eternal combat and victory:

There was today another white star in the sky of Santiago. It was perched in the heights, so it could wave –white and intimate in its flag– in the first moments of another 10 October. It was carried by party men, by people’s men, right at the beginning of the sunrise. Wave, white star. Shed your light on our path, and we will give our life. Life and victory. (Calzadilla et al., 10 October 1991)

Historical legitimacy is based on the equivalence between national independence, worldwide socialism, revolution, and popular will. This chain of equivalence allows the image to fix belonging, as well as the limits of debate (*Granma*, 15 March 1990). Only a year and a half later the call for debate, the banner hanging at the congress reduced history to an austere picture of José Martí and Karl Marx escorting the main slogan, ‘to save the Homeland, the Revolution and Socialism’ (Lee, 9 October 1991). This articulation can represent the will of ‘the Party’ to go back to the roots of socialism, and to look for an exceptional Cuban path at a time in which even the Soviet Union had abandoned the idea of ‘rectifying’ and democratising the socialist project (Calzadilla et al., 17 January 1991).

Throughout both periods, *Granma* establishes an equivalential continuity between the *mambises*, or independence fighters, the rebel combatants in Sierra Maestra and the Playa Girón heroes. The excerpt below illustrates an imagined conversation between a general of the independence wars and all Cubans from the Sancti Spiritus region. During this imagined conversation, Machado Ventura speaks for all the Espirituanos, who promise to carry on the legacy of all Cuban heroes of all times –whether independence fighters, rebel guerrilla leaders or contemporary combatants. The construction of synchronic and diachronic equivalence allows a party leader, Machado Ventura, to speak not only for ‘the Cuban people’, but also for all Cuban heroes, who are historically united through a commitment to resistance and to victory:

The sons of this territory know very well what they ought to do through daily and heroic work in order to halt the advancement of defeatism, of pessimism, and of those with wobbly legs that get scared and pretend to scare others. The leadership of our Party does not hesitate about the fact that the people from Sancti Spiritus will follow the example of our mambises, of the brave fighters of Sierra Maestra, and of

the combatants of the present generation, heirs of the glorious mambí general who, feeling fatally wounded, cried: “may the march carry on”. The people from Sancti Spiritus reply to Sánchez: ‘we will follow the march, general, we will fight, we will resist and we will win’, he [Machado Ventura] concluded. (Oramas, 29 January 1991)

The historical continuity between independence leaders such as José Martí and revolutionary leaders is not always explicit. For instance, the guerrilla group led by Fidel Castro is referred to as the Centenary Generation (*La generación del Centenario*) –they decided to assault the Moncada Barracks the same year that Cubans celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of José Martí. References to the Centenary Generation imply, therefore, a reference to the wars of independence.

Similarly, the ‘Updating’ (2010-2012) of the Cuban economic and social model is presented as a continuation of the ‘Rectification’ process that started in the mid-eighties, and which was externally interrupted by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the intensification of the US blockade.⁵⁷ This reference works as a historical legitimisation of the ‘update’, and as a guarantee for the Cubanness of the reforms, which respond to a sovereign decision rather than to external pressures. The excerpt below illustrates this point:

Cuba changed, threatened as it was. The Leadership of the Revolution had to immediately start juggling in order to survive, and to save the main achievements, supported by a people decided to defend them; henceforth the sentence ‘beans are more important than cannons’. Of two evils, choose the less and, without any delays, amend it: the amendment that was interrupted due to the unexpected outcome of the 90s is the one that are designed nowadays in the Guidelines on the Economic and Social Policy that the people have in their hands, before the VI Congress of the Cuban Communist Party. (Rojas, 25 November 2010)

Summarising, Baraguá and Girón have been used in *Granma* as a historical catachrestic reference that articulates an equivalence between Cuban challenges throughout history. This representation fulfils two main goals. First, it serves as a historical legitimisation of

⁵⁷ The US embargo was strengthened in 1996 through the approval of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act in 1996, also known as Helms-Burton Act. A few months later, the European Council of Ministers adopted the ‘Common Position’, which conditioned bilateral cooperation to improvements in Cuba’s human rights records.

‘the Revolution’. Second, it works as an intellectual inspiration for the debates, setting the limits of free speech.

Historical continuity is rhetorically constructed through different argumentative fallacies, among which hypothetical syllogism is particularly recurrent. According to this argumentative logic, if Cubans defeated Spanish and US imperialism at the independence and revolutionary wars, the support of the same roles and values that inspired national heroes back then will ensure eternal victories. Victory inspires every issue of the paper. For example, all issues of *Granma* have a drawing in the upper right corner of the front page that shows Fidel and Raúl Castro lifting their arms with clenched fists, celebrating victory in their military uniforms. Nevertheless, the imposition of victory can also become an uncomfortable burden. This can be seen in the excerpt below:

After having mentioned the existing economic difficulties and the complex international situation, the member of the Party asserted that what matters ‘is to instil in each collective that the goal is to overcome all difficulties, to demonstrate to the enemy that we will never surrender, that we are able to resist and to survive, to keep fighting for our development, as it pertains to our historical and revolutionary tradition, to the Baraguá spirit’. (Schlachter et al., 20 June 1990)

While victory is taken for granted, it is discursively organised around a series of inherited heroes, values and national symbols. In the following excerpt, Fidel Castro speaks for ‘all the people’ in a *pars pro toto* metonymy, listing the normative values (strength, courage, reason, conviction, pride) and roles (to free themselves, to resist, to win) that have historically guaranteed national victory and should inspire it in the future:

‘[W]e have shaken off the yoke a while ago’, he [Fidel] said. ‘Because the people that have been able to shake off the yoke of social slavery, the yoke of injustice, the yoke of colonialism, the yoke of neo-colonialism, the yoke of tyranny, will never be afraid again. We will never be afraid of the idea of death, even less when we know that we are not going to die, even less now, because we are going to resist; we are going to win under any circumstances, whether facing great tests in the economic field, or great tests in the battlefield. That is why, compañeros and compañeras, let’s say with more reason than ever, with more conviction than ever, and with more pride: Socialism or death! Homeland or death! We will win!’ (Pagés, 26 February 1991)

The values of Independence heroes are constructed both historically and geographically. The continuity between the independence wars and the fight of the IV Congress can be observed in the headline '*Soirée in the Céspedes Park. The lineage of Yara in our current Homeland*' (Calzadilla et al., 10 October 1991). In this example, the historical reference that is embedded in the name of a park creates a metaphor by which the sole naming of the independence fighter enables a physical materialisation of his descendants, who gather in the park with the purpose of continuing Céspedes' battle.

Historical unity can be constructed through a *pars pro toto* metonymy by which a part of the population comes to represent the values of the whole nation. A common strategy consists of claiming that a group of mobilised people represents all members of a specific community. For instance, students gathering in a rally are said to represent youth's support to the Baraguá postulates, which are linked to Cuban socialism, 'the Revolution' and Fidel Castro. This creates a historical chain of equivalence between past, present and future in which the youth, through loyalty and love, will ensure future victories against 'the enemy':

The square was filled mainly by young people, carrying banners and pieces of fabric in which they not only proclaimed their support to Baraguá's revolutionary postulates, to the construction of socialism in our country and swore loyalty and love to the Revolution and to Commander-in-chief and leader Fidel Castro, but also warned imperialism that, if they attack us, they will bite the dust of defeat. (Camacho Albert, 16 March 1990)

Another argumentation strategy consists of extending unity beyond a precise group, encompassing the whole nation. For instance, citizens from Santiago de Cuba gathering at a rally are described as '*representing all the people*', and ratifying the unity between the masses and '*their vanguard party*' (Granma, 15 March 1990). Historical equivalence is stressed by the physical presence of a group of people at a historic site (the former Moncada barracks), claiming a nationwide shared commitment to defend 'the Revolution' against 'the enemy' '*at any price*'. In this sense, 'the people' gathering in the rally encompass a set of values that are common to patriots of all eras: rebelliousness, revolutionary strength, and dignity –these values can be seen in Annex II.

Geographical continuity is constructed through a direct link between the Baraguá protest and the Moncada barracks, which took place in the 'Oriente', the Eastern region of the Island, presenting the second event as the historical culmination of the first –the

achievement of national freedom. This geographical chain is further extended to the early 1990s through the choice of Santiago de Cuba as the site for celebrating the IV Congress:

[Raúl] highlighted as well that there is continuity and historical brotherhood between the Baraguá Protest, which took place in a corner of this region [Santiago de Cuba], and the Moncada barracks, where the last stage of the definitive fight for national freedom was initiated. (Granma, 15 March 1990)

Through a composition fallacy, heroism is transmitted from one generation to another, and through one country to another. While Independence leader Antonio Maceo appears as *'the personification of the Cuban people'* (Peláez, 15 March 1990), Cuban internationalists continue the national combative tradition, engaging in the military defence of Angola's independence. This case illustrates a chain of equivalence by which the values of the Independence war heroes expand, travelling across centuries and spreading not only among groups and nationwide, but also across continents.

During the process of 'Updating' (2010-2012), the legitimacy of 'the Party' is established through historical references to early revolutionary history, reinforcing the continuity between early goals and the 'update' of the economic and social model. News stories establish an internal revolutionary continuity through references to the so-called 'historical generation' that fought in Sierra Maestra. For instance, *Granma* published an old quote from Che Guevara in which he described the ideal party of the future. The newspaper asserted that 'the Party' had fulfilled Che's ideals, implying the historical legitimacy of the revolutionary project.

The values of the independence heroes are directly transmitted to revolutionary combatants in Girón, who are 'heroes' themselves; then, these are transmitted in turn to 'the people'. Since heroes represent *'the best values of the people'*, the discursive articulation of heroism follows a circular fallacy by which 'the people' are both at the origin of heroism, as well as aspiring to it (Peláez, 15 March 1990). Finally, through a naturalistic fallacy, since 'the Cuban people' are naturally heroic they ought to fulfil heroic roles, reinforcing the idea of an eternal victory.

4.7 - The Discursive Articulation of Unity

The previous sections have examined *Granma's* articulation of 'the Cuban people' through a set of historical roles and values that ensure an eternal victory against an externalised enemy. However, an ontological approach to populism requires a closer focus on the strategies that

articulate unity and, therefore, a populist equivalence of demands. This section will examine the argumentative strategies that articulate collective unity in the coverage of the IV and the VI Congresses of the Communist Party of Cuba. In the following lines, unity will be analysed through four strategies: (1) the single party, (2) the leader, (3) collective emotions and (4) individual difference.

4.7.1 - The Single Party as an Embodiment of Unity

Granma presents an argumentative logic that justifies the restriction of civil and individual liberties in Cuba: (1) ‘the Revolution’ represents the will of ‘real Cubans’, given that nation, state and Revolution are constituted as equivalential; (2) there is a real external threat that can only be faced through unity, the sole guarantee of dignity and national independence; (3) ‘the people’ are not yet ready to undertake this task on their own and need Party-guidance. The division between revolutionary heroes and the rest of ‘the people’ creates a division between the elite and the masses by which the latter needs to be re-educated and to work hard in order to demonstrate their historical deservedness. In this sense, ‘the Party’ is categorised as a big brother, as a veteran fighter that escorts ‘the people’ through difficult times. The historical nature of ‘the Party’ makes its leadership unquestionable. As a party leader states, ‘[t]his is untouchable’ and ‘more than verified by experience and by practice’ (Calzadilla et al., 17 January 1991).

The Communist Party of Cuba is discursively constructed as an empty signifier, able to embody the will of all generations of Cuban fighters, the working class, and all honest –and therefore revolutionary– citizens:

Our Party should increasingly become the body and blood of the working people to which it belongs, and it should always share its life, its efforts and its needs. The Party will never tolerate corruption and privileges, and it will develop increasingly democratic methods and styles. The Party will always find its source of authority in the dialogue with the people, in the capacity of persuasion, in the coherence between words and facts, and in the example of militants’ and cadres’ dedication and sacrifice.

The Cuban Communist Party is now, and will always be, the Party of the Revolution, the Party of socialism and the Party of the Cuban nation. It embodies the ideals of justice and freedom that patriots and revolutionaries of all eras have fought for, the guarantee of continuity of our socialist cause, and the revolutionary unity of the people, bastion of resistance against the imperialist harassment.

Our Party, one, Martíán [from José Martí] and Marxist-Leninist, assumes great responsibilities in the face of society.

The Party exists and works for the people and that should be daily reflected in its methods, in the policies and procedures for joining it, in the mechanisms of evaluation and elections, in the ways in which political and ideological tasks are organised. The Party performs with masses' methods, and in a permanent contract with the masses. The Party does not only work with militants, but with all honest citizens, with all patriots, with all trends of opinion within the Revolution. (Granma, 16 March 1990)

People-Party unity is constructed as an essential element for the survival and democratisation of 'the Revolution'. Recalling a discourse that he gave in the National Assembly, Raúl Castro explains the historical importance of unity. The contradiction between individual difference and collective cohesion is revealed in the following excerpt, in which citizens' ability to participate in debates is limited by the foregrounded importance of unity:

In that discourse to the National Assembly I said as well that 'unity among revolutionaries, and between the leadership of the Revolution and the majority of the people, is our most important strategic weapon, the one that has allowed us to get here and to continue the perfecting [perfeccionamiento] of socialism in the future', and that 'unity is fostered and nourished in the widest socialist democracy and in the open discussion with the people of all topics, no matter how sensitive they are. That is why the sixth will be the Congress of all militants and all the people, who will actively participate in the adoption of fundamental decisions in the Revolution'. (Peláez, 10 November 2010)

Granma clearly states that debates are aimed at opening a dialogue between 'the Party' and 'the people'. This means that debates are aimed at unifying citizens' points of view around a series of changes that 'the Party' considers 'logical': *'The great consultation, stimulated from the perspective of the unity of people's interests, has started to pave the way'* (Hernández et al., 11 June 1990). This quote illustrates the unequal power relations between citizens and Party leaders. While citizens can only discuss pre-determined issues without any guarantees of effective participation in policy-making, 'the Party' is able to determine not only the topics to be discussed, but to judge the rationality of citizens' demands.

People-Party unity is twofold, though. It relies on mutual trust. In a circular fallacy, trust is conditional to unity to the extent that unity guarantees trust: trust in 'the Party', trust in 'the

people’, and trust in victory. The double articulation of unity can be observed in the following news story. The subheading asserts the ‘[u]nity of peasants with their Revolution’, repeating the words of a party leader without quotation marks –and conveying a sense of being taken for granted:

The essential thing, he concluded, the unity around our Revolution and the decision to go towards the construction and the improvement [perfeccionamiento] of our socialism, that is unanimous. And we have seen it here. He restated the trust of the Party in peasants and, in the face of any difficult moments to come, we count as always on you, who will certainly know how to battle in such conditions. (Calzadilla, 26 June 1990)

While Party leaders should be constantly in touch with citizens, existing channels of communication seem to be insufficient. According to an opinion article, leaders often limit their role to the automatic memorisation and repetition of Party documents without engaging with them at a personal level. In order to overcome the gap between technocratic language and people’s needs, the author calls for an emotional unity that bonds leaders, bureaucrats and ‘the people’ together:

They [Party leaders] do not offer everyday life examples, in the context that we all know. That is common to all of us. They do not move, they do not motivate people to reflect more in depth, they do not leave a mark in men’s mind. (Madruga Díaz, 21 June 1990)

The importance of reaching citizens at a personal level is clear in the paper: it allows ‘the Party’ to gain access to people’s demands, and to address them. While it seems that ‘the Party’ is open to an institutional articulation of popular demands, dealing with them individually and within the channels provided by the system, some excerpts suggest that the ultimate goal is to synchronise People-Party demands. According to this view, ‘the Party’ seeks to homogenise people’s identity and to construct ‘a people’ that is coherent with the official discourse.

The result is the creation of hegemonic campaigns that present citizen and Party demands as equivalential, disseminating them through slogans, discourses, and documents. The following excerpt illustrates the circular fallacy of a process of debate in which Party actors have ‘the truth’ on their side and, therefore, have the right to rearticulate popular demands in a way that supports partisan interests:

Indisputably, political leaders have many ways to stay in touch with the people, to reach them, but none is more effective than direct contact, than a dialogue without intermediaries because –if the necessary honesty is reached– the interior of men opens and it is not hard to exert an influence on it, even more when reason and truth are on our side. (Madruga Díaz, 21 June 1990)

Pronominal uses can be helpful for uncovering power relations in discourses. It is interesting to note that the use of the personal pronoun ‘us’ in the excerpt above appears as an all-inclusive category aimed at reinforcing the ‘people-party’ unity. However, a more nuanced analysis suggests that ‘us’ refers exclusively to ‘the Party’. Therefore, ‘honesty’, ‘reason’ and ‘truth’ lay on the side of ‘the Party’, which has the power and the duty of instilling these values in the masses. The discursive power of ‘the Party’ is what sustains a top-down discourse in which leaders are granted not only communicational hegemony (Waisbord, 2013b: 36), but also moral authority.

4.7.2 - The Leader as the Embodiment of Unity

This thesis focuses on two periods of national debate that preceded the IV and the VI congresses of the Communist Party of Cuba. Therefore, *Granma*’s coverage has a greater focus on the Party, rather than on individual leaders. However, it becomes apparent that Fidel Castro is a unifying figure in difficult times. Fidel, as people commonly know him, operates as an empty signifier that synthesises ‘*the virile heart of the people*’; a role model of faith, heroism, and victory (Lee, 10 October 1991). This is exemplified in the following excerpt:

Leading the Revolution’s plan, we count on the guidance and great experience of the compañero Fidel. It is not in vain that all the enemy’s campaign is focused against him. In these difficult times, Fidel signifies depth of thought, clear foresight of dangers, and the safe course of our Homeland. His creative sermons, his tenacious leading and organisational efforts, his working methods and style, his permanent dialogue with the people, indicate us the path to keep marching forward. (Del Barrio Menéndez et al., 4 February 1991)

Fidel Castro participated in the debates leading to the IV Congress. In *Granma*’s coverage, he is presented as mastering every subject, from economics to science; as knowing all details, from agricultural micro jet irrigation to the number of mosquito nets delivered to military contingents. As a chief, his role is to hold leaders accountable, and during debates he asks for specific figures

and explanations. Despite his status, the leader is also seen as discussing (*'dialogar'*) national problems with citizens and trying to find better solutions. Fidel discusses with everyone, engaging in conversations with other delegates, offering his opinion but also asking for advice. In this sense, Fidel Castro appears as an equal; he is equivalent to 'the people' insomuch they are all involved in the same battle for improving the situation of the country (Del Barrio Menéndez et al., 4 February 1991).

The unity between the Commander in Chief and 'the people' is built on personal links of honour and trust, which compels the latter to fulfil individual promises of victory –and victory implies references to 'the enemy' (Ramírez Alonso, 21 February 1991). Reciprocal trust strengthens unity, and unity stimulates success. The unity between 'the people' and Fidel is constructed through exemplification. For instance, a news story praises a group of waiters who donated tourists' tips to Fidel so he can invest them in the collective project (Pagés et al., 25 February 1991). Unity is also achieved through a presentation of Fidel Castro as embodying peoples' thoughts (Del Barrio Menéndez et al., 4 February 1991).

During the 'Special Period' (1990-1991), different doctors and researchers showed gratitude for the commitment of 'the Revolution' to health care, as well as for Fidel's trust in medical progress. For instance, the head of a research institute remembers the hopeless task of building laboratories in Cuba, without external help. However, Fidel's conviction transformed an unfeasible task into a mission accomplished:

'Soon after', he continued, 'the Commander in Chief entrusted them with the task of building all the necessary equipment in our country. He recognised that they were not sure of being able to fulfil the task, but the drive of Fidel's trust motivated them, and they did it. The first prototype was manually ensembled as a goodwill gesture to the Third Congress of the Party'. (Pagés et al., 25 February 1991)

During the process of 'Updating' (2010-2012), Fidel Castro becomes more a symbolic than an active political figure. Therefore, the newspaper uses a series of strategies for remembering the importance of the leader. Fidel continues to be referred to as the Chief of the Cuban Revolution, and is often quoted in Raúl's discourses. During the period of debate, *Granma* published a selection of old Fidel quotes on the front page of the paper on a nearly daily basis. It is in the second period, half-retired from politics, that Fidel Castro becomes an empty signifier of himself, standing for the desired roles and values of 'the Cuban people'. In other words, Fidel is characterised as a prophet whose name alone encompassed relentless battle and victory. Remembering the Commander in Chief's role in the 1959 victory, a journalist recalls how Fidel

'knew that just in front was the powerful enemy of everything, and of everyone, whose bombs had already killed innocent and powerless Cuban farmers in 1957.' (Arturo, 8 January 2011). And continues: *'[f]rom the untamed Santiago de Cuba to the capital, millions of Cubans acclaimed the vanquishers and altogether cried Fidel's name, which already meant battles and victories.'*

Finally, Fidel Castro's body becomes a symbol on itself, from the olive-green uniform to his rebel beard. For instance, popular memory says that two doves landed on Fidel's shoulder just at the moment in which he triumphantly entered Havana, on 8 January 1959. While only a metaphor, these doves became the single white star on the Cuban flag (Arturo, 8 January 2011). In this sense, Fidel Castro embodied not just victory, but the starting point of true national independence.

4.7.3 - Collective Emotions as Unity

The previous section analysed the articulation of collective unity through a single Party and the figure of Fidel Castro. However, unity is not only achieved through ideological work, but also through a shared state of spirit. This is particularly relevant in *Granma's* coverage of the IV Congress of the Party, in 1991. In the coverage, citizens of Santiago de Cuba are described as *'possessed'* by a *'transformational fever'*, very much in the line of the IV Congress' goals (Ramírez Alonso, 21 February 1991). The optimistic mood of 'the people' during the Congress is also exemplified in the organisation of cultural and recreational festivals and rallies –the latter articulated as representing support, rather than protest (Blanco, 10 October 1991).

The use of a *pars pro toto* metonymy in assemblies allows Fidel Castro to set the right spirit that will allow 'the people' to overcome difficulties: to *'work, resist, and win'*. However, messages often turn into affective unity. For instance, Fidel asks people to *'follow their heart'* throughout the fight (Gómez Chacón, 19 February 1991).

Inspired by Fidel Castro's human solidarity with 'all noble causes in the world', 'good leaders' are constructed as caring not only for productive goals, but also for workers' personal and spiritual concerns. In this sense, the role of leaders is close to the work of religious guides: to care about the human soul. News stories construct a chain of equivalence of human values led by Fidel Castro, who set the example for all party leaders (who in turn set the example for 'the people'). People's affection towards Fidel, and the emotion of meeting him in person, are exemplified in a female Party delegate's lifelong wish to ask Fidel for a kiss (Calzadilla et al., 10 October 1991). This is coherent with the description of Fidel in the interviews as a *'seducer of the masses'*.

Unity is established in news stories as a shared national mood, characterised by the cultivation of joy, optimism and a positive spirit in the face of difficulties. The apparent contradiction between two of the main values during the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991), optimism and realism, is solved in the headline ‘*With realistic optimism and confidence in the future*’ (Correoso Pérez, 2 October 1991). The adjective ‘realistic’ limits the scope of optimism, rather than the opposite, implying the effect that external constraints has in the development of revolutionary goals. Nevertheless, optimism slowly takes over realism in *Granma*’s coverage as the congress approaches. This is further developed in the content analysis of roles and values –see Annex II. For instance, *Granma*’s decision to choose smiling workers and leaders in pictures is consistent with the 1990s focus on joy and optimism. When workers smile with Fidel, pictures reinforce the image of the leader as a soothing presence (Ramírez Alonso, 21 February 1991). Fidel is articulated as bringing people together around values of unity and defence:

He highlighted that we are going through a phase in which we require the unity of the country, of the Party, everyone’s cohesion around Fidel, since the complexity of current circumstances brings us together to live a moment of revolutionary glory in the defence of socialism and the Revolution. (Calzadilla et al., 26 June 1990)

When Fidel Castro visits Santiago de Cuba in February 1991, keeping an eye on the preparations for the IV Congress, the coverage shows a series of pictures of Fidel surrounded by workers and scientists. The choice of Santiago de Cuba, the ‘Heroic City’, is charged with symbolism, since the region is embedded in collective memory with quasi magical qualities. The headline is concise, but highly evocative: ‘*The promise of victory*’ has historical implications that refer to the rebel soldiers’ achievements in Sierra Maestra (Ramírez Alonso, 21 February 1991). The choice of an impersonal headline leaves unclear who is that is promising victory. Although the goal of Fidel’s visit could be to reassure citizens, the last sentence of the article reveals that it is ‘the people of Santiago’ who promise, in unison, another victory to Fidel. The idea of victory becomes not just an expression of optimism, but a personal commitment to the leader and to Cuban history (Ramírez Alonso, 21 February 1991). Some news stories contain hyperbolic references to Fidel’s energy and intensity, debating for up to 15 hours and visiting the main production centres in just three days. Fidel instils revolutionary values in ‘the people’, who follow his optimistic spirit:

If there was a confident, enthusiastic, critical, optimistic and joyful Fidel, there was also a people in tune with him, not satisfied with the achievements –giant as they are–, that have come out of their hands and nevertheless more committed than ever

to what is now forging, and to many things that will take place. (Ramírez Alonso, 21 February 1991)

On the first day of the Congress, *Granma* uses an emotional language when describing massive popular support and enthusiasm in the reception of delegates to the Congress. This can be seen in the following headline: *‘Brimming over with popular enthusiasm in the welcome’*, and the sub-heading: *‘Fidel participates in the welcome along with the people of Santiago. Thousands of people congregated on the streets of the Heroic City waving at the caravan and leaving emotive scenes of jubilation and joy.’* (Calzadilla et al., 10 October 1991). Through a metaphor, the buses that bring delegates to Santiago de Cuba are transformed into a caravan, recreating the ‘Caravan of Freedom’ that took a victorious Fidel Castro from Santiago de Cuba to Havana in the early days of the 1959 victory. In the days leading to the IV Congress, delegates retrace Fidel’s steps, joining the caravan throughout the country towards Santiago, in the Cuban Oriente. In a *totum pro parte* synecdoche, delegates represent ‘all the people’, who symbolically jumped into the caravan and travelled with them to the Congress: *‘And ten million left for Santiago’* (Lee, 10 October 1991). However, the chain of equivalence is geographically and diachronically expanded in the text, so that delegates represented not only all Cubans from the whole country, but become a living incarnation of the unitary will of all Cubans in national history.

4.7.4 - Individual Difference as Unity

Media coverage of debates is based on the assumption that ‘the people’ effectively and freely participate in political decision-making. The role of ‘the Party’ is to absorb people’s demands, elaborating a series of measures that are discussed with the revolutionary representatives of ‘the people’, and incorporating their feedback into the final policies. The importance of citizens’ individual opinion is stressed in headlines such as *‘Listening to everybody’s voices’* (Calzadilla, 1 October 1991), or *‘Counting on everyone’* (*‘Contando con todos y todas’*) (Batista Valdés et al., 22 January 1991). However, the apparent institutional articulation of citizens’ individual demands is based on the assumption that individual points of view contribute to shared goals. The following excerpt exemplifies the way in which diversity of opinions is compatible with a unanimous agreement:

What did this process leave for participants? Unlike what many expected, the discussion of dissimilar opinions generated better communication and, therefore, much more trust among all, and that is how a sentiment of unity has been inspiring the spirits of an increasing number of teachers. (Jiménez, 3 May 1990)

The level of interdiscursivity between leaders' and workers' messages tend to blur the line between top-down and bottom-up demands. A close analysis of *Granma*'s coverage throughout the calls to debate reveals the discursive circularity of the debate. In an initial phase, 'the Party' sets a series of goals in a document; then, participants are invited to read and internalise the document, which is then discussed in Party-led debates in which leaders try to convince participants of the soundness of the proposals. In a second phase, *Granma* selects a range of quotes from participants that amplify the message of 'the Party'. Some workers go as far as to declare the unconditionality of their support, whichever the nature of the specific task. The following excerpt from a labourer's quote illustrates the latter point:

Considering the current situation in the country, we need to make a greater effort now. We need to work efficiently, to increase quality, to offer more with less. Personally, I am ready to offer all that. I do it already. I am ready to go wherever the Revolution needs me. I am ready to do whatever the Revolution says, here or anywhere. Plus, I am a reservist [soldier] and I fight with anyone who messes with this, with my Revolution, from the inside or from the outside. (Shelton et al., 10 October 1991)

The contradiction between the prevalence of individual voices and collective unity can be observed in the news story '*Listening to everyone's voices*', in which the diversity of opinions outlined in the headline goes on to merge into the single voice of 'the Party', an empty signifier that is able to unify citizens' goals:

During the debates, dedicated to the study of the document, militants have shown that the Party is a single voice; while made up with the voices of thousands of its members, its essential goal is to look for paths of rectification, to improve [perfeccionar] all the chores of the country's governing body. (Calzadilla, 1 October 1991)

News story after news story reveals that people's commitment 'the Party' should be '*unconditional*'. The coverage of debates follows a set narrative in which debates lead to a unanimous approval of the guidelines (Gabri Gumá, 12 November 1990). Unanimity is assumed from the outset. For instance, Fidel and Raúl Castro are unanimously proposed as delegates to the IV Congress ahead of time by Cuban Internationalists in Angola, who are described as the living representatives of Cuban heroes (De Las Nieves Gala, 16 January 1991). Finally, party leaders express their satisfaction with people's support of the original guidelines. The cycle ends with

leaders' satisfaction with the levels of responsibility and compromise of participants (Mena et al., 15 January 1991).

The Political Bureau calls all militants, all members of revolutionary organisations and 'all the people' to discuss national problems. The call is articulated in *Granma* as all-encompassing, using rather vague terms. It is this ambiguity that guarantees the unifying power of the call, which becomes a channel for the expression of every citizen's demands. However, the focus on individual participation comes at a price: everyone is responsible in finding solutions to collective problems:

What distinguishes this call is not the assumption of pre-fixed solutions to the transcendental matters that are addressed on it, but to offer a conceptual approach, to establish a framework for analysis, to set basic goals and, henceforth, to open a wide discussion on how to address specific changes, how to determine their reach, and how to decide the way in which they will be carried out. The Party, unlike on previous occasions, is not only calling the people to study a document, to support it, or to debate a particular application of it; it is calling all militants, all organisations and all the people to reflect upon society as a whole, to cast ideas for analysing the flaws and deficiencies that, in one way or another, are obvious, to progress into a new era of the Rectification process, towards a more encompassing political and institutional improvement [perfeccionamiento] of the nation. (Granma, 23 June 1990)

The unity between 'the Party' and 'the people' entails that risk and liability are to be shared. The magnitude of the challenges requires a shared Party-people responsibility at looking for solutions to national problems. In another excerpt, Fidel Castro explains agricultural mobilisations during the 'Special Period' as a way of learning the importance of shared problem-solving:

For a population of 800.000 workers in a city, he calculated, 200.000 will go on to agricultural tasks once a year; it is not an exaggerated amount and it also has a revolutionary value: the participation and education on the idea of contributing to problem-solving. (Pagés et al., 25 February 1991)

The structural nature of Cuba's problems and deficiencies is recognised in certain news stories that relate delinquency to structural deficiencies, such as discouraging low wages and tedious bureaucratic mechanisms that diverted workers from productive goals (Hernández et al., 11 June 1990). However, a great part of the discursive weight falls on individuals, rather than structures,

and on workers, rather than on leaders. While the government invests in agricultural and productive programmes, worker's indiscipline and tolerance of delinquency damages the national economy. Bureaucrats' tendency to avoid personal indiscipline through the use of plural forms and the passive voice is harshly criticised by a member of the Political Bureau. He reminds all participants that responsibility is always individual, and each individual should be held accountable for productive problems:

Julián Rizo criticised certain interventions there that depersonalised everyone's responsibility in the matter, emphasising that all and each man related to coffee farming are to blame for the low efficiency, and considered that it is shameful to talk about grass infestation and rural population drift as someone else's problems.
(Camacho Albert, 6 November 1990)

Individual responsibility for economic development is invoked in both periods through leaders' references to those who take advantage of the system, either through a diversion or a waste of resources. Workers who steal are portrayed as responsible for economic stagnation (Puig Meneses et al., 15 November 2010).

During the process of 'Updating' (2010-2012), there are two new articulations of personal responsibility. First, there is a clear focus on citizens' individual responsibility in their own wellbeing, which is no longer taken for granted –as it was in the 1990s. For instance, the Minister of Construction, Fidel Figueroa de la Paz, acknowledges that 38% of peoples' houses are in '*not very good condition*' or in '*bad condition*' (Puig Meneses et al., 15 November 2010). However, the state is only held responsible for making construction materials available, while it encourages families to improve their own homes (Puig Meneses et al., 15 November 2010). This is what Raúl Castro euphemistically calls '*to stimulate construction work through individual effort*' (Puig Meneses et al., 15 November 2010). Second, the improvement of workers' economic situation is constructed as conditional to work, rather than granted by a socialist state-management of the economy. Such conditionality implies individual responsibility on economic development. For instance, wage raises for '*the people who really work*' are conditional to an increase of productivity (Puig Meneses et al., 15 November 2010). This indicates an emphasis on individual responsibility in facing economic problems, as well as finding solutions.

Under Raúl Castro's Cuba, each citizen is called to look after the eradication of collective deficiencies can damage the implementation of the socioeconomic guidelines (Varela Pérez, 7 December 2010). Raúl calls each worker to be exigent and to demand efficacy in the workplace, even if that meant '*looking for trouble*'. It remains unexplained who would cause such trouble,

what trouble would look like, or what would motivate workers to face punishment –beyond obeying leaders’ guidelines (Puig Meneses et al., 15 November 2010). Finally, the focus on people’s individual ‘self-rectification’ and on the individual study of the guidelines is used as a way of diffusing responsibility. Therefore, a focus on individual responsibility can be articulated as a way of infringing on citizen’s right to hold leaders accountable.

4.8 - Discussion: The Articulation of Collective Identity

This chapter has examined the way in which Cuban national newspaper *Granma* has articulated collective unity in moments of national crisis and debate. In this section, I will discuss the findings within previous debates on media and populism. The findings indicate that ‘the people’ have inherited a nationalist and revolutionary identity that determines the limits of political participation, and intellectual debate. From a populist perspective, the press articulates the people-as-underdog through the construction of a Revolution of a humble, hard-working class, which is engaged in a David versus Goliath fight against 1) transnational political and economic powers and 2) a stagnant bureaucratic elite that holds on to outdated soviet structures of power. One of the main findings is precisely the presence of anti-elitist claims that criticize the stagnation of revolutionary structures of power, contesting the hegemonic discourse.

Historian Lilian Guerra (2012) considers that the endurance of the Cuban revolutionary state in times of severe crisis needs to be understood from the roots of citizens’ engagement with the project in the early days. Guerra (2012) considers that ‘the Revolution’ radicalised itself over the first few years because those who supported it envisioned a radical social change in Cuba. This would be one of the main victories of the leadership, who convinced the masses of the necessity for a politically radical project. Radicalism was discursively constructed as the sole guarantee for maintaining equality and national independence. This Manichaeian framework is at the roots of people’s (including journalists’) involvement in the dissolution of the legal structures that protected their civil rights, such as freedom of association, and freedom of the press. In Guerra’s words (2012: 9), ‘*most Cubans hailed the collapse of these rights as the only way to prevent dissent from opening the floodgates of counter-revolution*’.

The role of a hegemonic project, such as the Cuban Revolution, is ‘*to construct and stabilise nodal points that are the bases of a social order, the main aim being to become a social imaginary*’ (Carpentier and De Cleen, 2007: 269). In other words, the chains of equivalence that articulated ‘the Revolution’ in the early years have been naturalised in social imaginaries and practices. However, given the fragility of these articulations, the Cuban media has played an

active role in maintaining the legitimacy of the revolutionary project. This has been achieved through a construction of a collective project, embodied by a patriotic and revolutionary people, who is united in the fight for national independence, the Revolution, and socialism.

The analysis of *Granma* indicates that ‘the Cuban people’ have been constructed as a united in-group in the national press. More specifically, the press has designed a clear net of equivalences in which ‘the Cuban people’, while diverse, are the starting point for legitimising a sequence of three equivalential signifiers, namely ‘the Revolution’ (Fidel, ‘the Party’), the nation and socialism. These signifiers have provided stability and fixed the meaning to the revolutionary project, allowing discourse to adapt to new circumstances without losing its specificity. The articulation of these nodal points can be explicit, and some excerpts clearly connect the Revolution with socialism and nationalism. However, this articulation can also be more nuanced. A less apparent strategy has been the attribution of a shared set of roles and values to historical heroes, national leaders and individual citizens through interdiscursivity.⁵⁸ Finally, these roles and values are presented as opposed to those of ‘the enemy’ and, therefore, setting the frontiers of belonging.

One of the main criticism of Laclau’s conceptualisation of equivalential chains is that elements in those chains are presented as equally important. Therefore, it is impossible to discern the relative importance of each element, and its evolution throughout time. The use of Atlas.ti has allowed me to take into account the density of different elements in both periods. A visual representation situates Cuban heroes as leading legitimacy, followed by national leaders, militants, and ‘the people’. However, a focus on power rather than legitimacy would modify this chain, positioning the revolutionary leadership at the top of the pyramid. This suggests that the leadership has co-opted history and used it in a way that reinforces the legitimacy of the revolutionary project.

Laclau contends that unity is constructed through catachresis, that is, through the articulation of dispersed and non-*a priori* related elements around a nodal point (empty signifier). The data indicates that the strongest articulation consists of the triad nation-Revolution-socialism. The unity of these three elements is catachrestical; that is, they are discursively constructed as equivalent without any *a priori* element that links one to the others. This association is not given but the result of a hypothetical syllogism by which national independence will be guaranteed only by the successful articulation of the Revolution and socialism.

⁵⁸ The way in which the roles and values of the Revolution are articulated in equivalential chains can be seen in the findings of the content analysis, in Annex II.

The creation of national identity and national independence date from the late nineteenth century and, therefore, preceded the 1959 Revolution. However, *Granma* portrays ‘the Revolution’ as completing an unfulfilled process of national independence, interrupted by the US neo-colonial model in Cuba. The data shows that ‘the Revolution’ is constructed as a stable signifier, able to reincarnate independence fighters as guerrilla leaders and to merge national independence and socialism. The emptiness of the revolutionary project allows to discursively present the Cuban Revolution as the most supported movement on earth, gaining the sympathy of all noble human beings, of all the dispossessed. Nevertheless, the data shows the incompleteness of the revolutionary process, which has been damaged by internal and external deviations. In light of this problems, the nation becomes the strongest nodal point, giving sense, legitimacy and purpose to an incomplete revolutionary project.

One of the main problems of ‘the Revolution’ has been the obsession of infusing every aspect of life with revolutionary meaning. This can be seen in the following quote from Cuban American scholar José Quiroga (2005), who works on the Island’s cultural representations of collective history:

In the case of Cuba, the imposition of meaning on every aspect of life, culture, and its representation, problematizes all explanatory attempts. From the outset, the Revolution had meaning, cultural objects revealed something, phenomena were meant to represent. (Quiroga, 2005: 15)

In line with Quiroga, the data indicates that there are key discursive elements that connect historical, political, and media discourses of Cubanness. These elements behave as nodal points, temporarily fixing meaning through chains of significance that transcend a single genre, or format. In this sense, nodal points are intertextual, since they are reproduced at all levels of society, from Party documents to political speeches and workers claims. In the national press, a pervasive example of interdiscursivity is the literal use of leaders’ quotes in headlines, which are decontextualised from their original source and, therefore, internalised.

Interdiscursivity is widespread during the process of ‘Updating’ (2010-2012), in which *Granma* publishes selected quotes from Fidel Castro on the front page on the newspaper on a daily basis. All quotes refer to the need of acknowledging mistakes in order to improve (*perfeccionando*) ‘the Revolution’. The publication of old quotes during the period of debate fulfils a double role. On the one hand, it reinstates the ideological and moral authority of Fidel Castro despite his disappearance from public life. On the other hand, it serves as a historical legitimisation for the

changes undertaken by Raúl Castro, which are presented as coherent with, and inspired by, the words of the Commander in Chief.

Interdiscursivity can be observed in historical references, many of which evoke famous quotes from independence leaders. For instance, intertextual references are present in the use of de/re-contextualised quotes from Cuban intellectual José Martí. At the opening day of the IV Congress, *Granma* published a drawing of a machete, the tool that slaves used in the plantations and which became a weapon during the independence wars. Over the machete, there is the following quote from Martí: *'It prevails what the people want'*. The quote over the machete constructs a narrative of historical continuity by which national revolution originated in the second half of the 19th century and was carried on by different leaders throughout history, from Martí to Fidel. From a historical perspective, the 'Special Period' and the Girón battle become just another bump in the road, and the Congress a way of overcoming it.

Intertextuality can be found in similar articulations of historical anecdotes. For instance, there is certain resemblance in Céspedes and Fidel Castro's optimism and trust in victory. During the 'Special Period' (1990-1991), Céspedes is quoted as saying that he could guarantee victory against all odds just with just twelve men. Similarly, during the process of 'Updating' (2010-2012) Raúl Castro remembers arriving to Sierra Maestra carrying only seven guns. When he expressed his concern, Fidel responded with enthusiasm: *'With seven rifles, we will win the war this time'* (6853). These two stories work as a reminder that the nation, and 'the Revolution', have overcome harder times through optimism, trust, and faith, which enable 'the people' to overcome the scarcity material resources. These metaphors are particularly relevant during both periods of study, in which the Party attempts to tackle economic recession through new socioeconomic guidelines.

4.8.1 - *Granma*'s Construction of 'the People'

In chapter one, I have argued that in 1959 'the Cuban people' took on a symbolic debt to Fidel Castro and other guerrilla leaders. In exchange for national independence, pride, and freedom, 'the people' were expected to contribute with unconditional support, sacrifice, and obedience. These requests can be observed in the following passage from Che Guevara, published on 12 March 1965:

We know that sacrifices lie ahead and that we must pay a price for the heroic fact that we are, as a nation, a vanguard. We, as leaders, know that we must pay a price

for the right to say that we are the head of a people that is at the head of Latin America. Each and every one of us punctually pays his quota of sacrifice, conscious of being rewarded with the satisfaction of fulfilling a duty, conscious of advancing with everyone toward the new man visible on the horizon. (Guevara and Castro, 1989: 16)

Most scholars recognise the emotional and ideological support that ‘the Revolution’ generated throughout its first decade of existence (Quiroga, 2005; Guerra, 2012). Despite initial mass support, Guerra (2012: 11) wonders whether Cubans were quickly trapped in a spiral that left little space for dissent, passing from ‘*acting for the Revolution*’ to ‘*acting the part of a revolutionary*’. Public support, as well as unity against ‘the enemy’, became routine, staged in daily practices:

Public euphoria and political spontaneity, so central to the early mobilizations in support of the government, were programmed to be achieved through their opposites, rehearsal and performance. (Guerra, 2012: 20)

The data reveals that the construction of Cuban popular identity is similar to Bourdieu’s (1991) idea of *habitat*, based on the collective sharing of a set of values and roles shared within the in-group, to which individuals are collectively and emotionally attached and which translate themselves in a series of top-down expectations. In the case of Cuba, these expectations emanate from peers, from older generations, from cadres and leaders, from Fidel Castro, and from pre-revolutionary heroes. The expectations of ‘the Cuban people’ go beyond sharing a set of ideas. They also require sharing a national, socialist, guerrilla and revolutionary identity that appear as *equivalential*.

‘The Cuban people’ are constructed in news stories as being (1) revolutionary, (2) partisan, (3) Fidelista, (4) patriotic and (5) socialist. First, ‘the Cuban people’ are articulated as being naturally revolutionary. It is important to highlight that ‘the Revolution’ is used in singular, yet it encompasses different revolutions that took place throughout the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. The use of Revolution in singular stresses the equivalence between all Cuban fights and portrays the 1959 Revolution as a natural and historical continuation of peoples’ struggles.

The data shows the importance of both the single party and Fidel Castro as guarantees for national unity. In discursive terms, ‘the Party’ appears as the leading institution of ‘the Revolution’, and as a single party, able to reinforce cohesion and unity. There is an interesting

nuance that is implied in some news stories. While ‘the Party’ is conceived as a unifying force, internal problems produced by the bureaucratic elite has created estrangement between the leaders and the bases of ‘the Party’; between the militants and the common people. This is illustrated by references to paternalism, or by the lack of touch between party leaders and workers. Therefore, *Granma* recognises the danger of creating a distant, elitist party that welcomes the most talented people while leaving bases of ‘the Party’ without the support, talent, and autonomy that they need in order to function. Therefore, the nodality of the leader, Fidel Castro, is presented as a more stable and unproblematic for connecting with ‘the people’, both emotionally and in practice. Fidel Castro possesses the power of personally solving problems that bureaucratic processes and lack of coordination between party institutions have delayed for years.

The articulation of ‘the people’ as ‘Fidelista’ is encompassing yet subtle during the debates that precede the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991), while it appears hyperbolised during the debates that preceded the ‘Updating’ (2010-2012).⁵⁹ When Fidel is named, the importance of his intellectual guidance, of his flawless values, and of his special closeness to ‘the people’ is highlighted. During the period of ‘Updating’ (2010-2012), the presence of Fidel is in the front page of *Granma*, who also published periodical columns and quotes from the leader.

The fourth element, patriotism, is tightly linked to the revolutionary liberation wars of the late 19th century, when a Cuban national identity started settling in people’s minds (Vitier, 2006). I have argued that national independence is constructed as the main legitimising element of the 1959 Revolution. The remembrance of the past is emotionally associated with an idealised, atavistic image of the late 19th-century independence wars, recreating the unfinished project of national independence and using it as a legitimisation strategy for the present. The nation is constructed as a natural and ongoing historical process.⁶⁰ Coherently with this idea, the main enemy is that which threatens national unity, namely Imperialism, incarnated in the United States. Capitalism, which threatens socialism more directly, appears as a secondary enemy in the 1990s and is barely mentioned in the second.

Finally, ‘the people’ are discursively presented as socialist. Socialism appears as particularly vulnerable in the 1990s due to the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of

⁵⁹ The focus on socialism in the first period, and on Fidel Castro in the second period, indicates that when a nodal point in the discourse is under threat, its importance is highlighted in a top-down effort to counter-weight the erosion to which this unifying element is being exposed to by the circumstances.

⁶⁰ This is further developed in chapter four, which looks at the role of history in the articulation of ‘the Cuban people’.

socialism in Eastern Europe. However, unity around socialism is strengthened in media discourse, and there are multiple manifestations of popular reaffirmation of socialism. Socialism is interpreted in the light of the circumstances as an often-blind project that needs to be constantly improved (*perfeccionado*) through a Marxist-Leninist inspiration (1990-1991), as well as through collective efforts to create a Cuban type of socialism, compatible with the country's reality and with Latin America's wave of 21st century-socialism.

Some scholars have called the binary opposition between openness and pluralism in political theory into question. For instance, Bloom and Dallyn (2011) see a certain degree of political openness and pluralism as essential for strengthening a given social order. These scholars consider that a certain degree of state-led openness can help to stabilise hegemonic meaning around fixed points of planned contestation, as shown in the following excerpt:

Social order is made possible via the establishment of stabilized political frontiers with which debate can legitimately occur, identity can be constituted and politics can be practiced. (Bloom and Dallyn, 2011: 54)

The empowerment of 'the people' through top-down calls to popular participation should not be taken for granted, since it depends on the origins and the goals of the project that popular mobilisation will serve. In many cases, participation can hide the hegemonic agenda of a distant elite:

Participation has, in most cases, a utilitarian sense, and is limited to cooperation or collaboration with actions that have been planned by other actors and in spaces that are usually far from where the people are expected to act. In those circumstances, participation is more symbolic than real, and its supervised development seems to establish it as a way of concealing forms of subjugation. (Rebellato, 2005: 62)

In the case of Cuba, Party-led debates could have the goal of shaping pluralism *a priori* by establishing the boundaries of legitimate public discussion. The clear establishment of limits to debate reinforces Bloom and Dallyn's (2011) conceptualisation of top-down processes of political openness as complementary, rather than opposed, to hegemonic articulation. This pessimistic view can be observed in the work of Cuban intellectual Mayra Espina (2008: 9), who identifies several elements that hinder critical debate on the Island: leaders' illusion of '*possessing all the legitimate questions and all the infallible answers*', the establishment of unquestionable positions on everything, the orientation of '*the right position*' on all historical, economic, social, and cultural matters, and the arbitrary evaluation of certain issues as '*sensitive*'.

Discussing the culture of debate in Cuba, historian Pedro Pablo Rodríguez and sociologist Mayra Espina criticise the lack of formalised spaces of debate to give voice to people's demands (in Hernández, 2008: 268-272). For Espina, the lack of a culture of debate in Cuba has its roots in the political planning of social and political change, a plan which is '*excessively authoritarian, vertical, centralist*', where strategic ideas are manufactured in advance, under the premise of unity, and debate is only reserved to issues of minor interest (in Hernández, 2008: 286). Other intellectuals, such as Cuban leading historian Oscar Zanetti conclude that public debate does not exist in the country altogether (in Hernández, 2008: 286). While debate would entail the confrontation of divergent, conflictive opinions, even in intellectual spaces such as *Último Jueves* opinions flow in parallel lines, and do not completely collide.

Overall, despite the existence of serious limits to public debate, there are certain spaces where the intellectual elite openly discusses political responsibility in the authoritarian decline of 'the Revolution'. One of those spaces is the monthly debate organised by the academic journal *Temas*, called *Último Jueves*. However, some scholars consider that Party-led debates are also essential for boosting popular participation and, therefore, contributing to citizens' involvement in the democratisation of Cuban politics. Party calls to debate are for Arnold August (2013) an example of participatory democracy. According to this view, Party 'guidelines' are inspired by citizens' expression of dissatisfaction during the period of Rectification (1986) or the nationwide debates that took place between September and October 2007.⁶¹ In 2010, debates extended for a longer period of time. Official data talks about 8.913.838 participants and a bottom-up modification of 68% of the original guidelines (which were further changed after delegates' debates).⁶² The role of the media in the 'update' of Cuban social and economic system was discussed in the 2012 I Conference of the CCP, which dealt with political and ideological work, and which took place a few months after in the VI Congress. The CCP issued a document on 13 October 2011 that established the issues that would be discussed during the conference. The goal number 67 stated that the mass media needed to become a platform that disseminates culture and debate, offering '*avenues for knowledge, analysis and permanent exercise of opinion*' and developing a journalistic culture that is able to '*get rid of self-censorship, mediocrity, bureaucratic and sugar-coated language, idleness, rhetoric, triumphalism and banality*'. (PCC, 2011)

⁶¹ Over five million Cubans participated in the 2007 debate, expressing criticism in the 48.8% of their contributions (August, 2013: 123).

⁶² Changes to guidelines dealt with demands for more popular control, administrative decentralisation, the decreasing quality of education and health services, the sale of homes and cars, the progressive disappearance of the ration book (*libreta de abastecimiento*), or the restructuration of jobs in the public sector.

4.8.2 - The Collective Roles and Values of ‘the Cuban People’

In the introduction, I quoted Eduardo Galeano’s (2015: 7) admiration for Fidel Castro’s code of honour, for his old-fashioned values, and their importance for Cuba’s national achievements. As I have shown in this chapter, the data indicates that this is intrinsically related to a particular reading of history, which inspires the behaviour of the ‘new man’, and ensures a prosperous future. Quiroga (2005: 28) calls the prophetic use of historic victories so as to predict future achievements ‘*oracular use of history in the future perfect*’. This oracle has become the official historical narrative of ‘the Revolution’, bringing about a way of speaking of the future that concealed the possibility of failure.

While the use of a ‘elliptical morality’ and a ‘oracular history’ is founded on the works of national liberation hero José Martí, it is important not to decontextualise his works. After the 1959 Revolution, these strategies were no longer used for unifying ‘the people’ in times of war, but to prepare the Cubans for a state of permanent revolution that started, rather than ended, that year (Guerra, 2012: 7). In the press, the construction of a ‘collective memory’ (Halbwachs and Coser, 1992) is a daily practice. This construction is based on a series of historic events, places, dates and heroes that are considered of great importance for Cubans, and which need to constantly be remembered and passed on to younger generations. The daily remembrance of the past allows us to establish a connection between history and memory; a temporal stretching of past discourses, mythical events, and revolutionary symbols, which are (1) decontextualised and embedded with a particular revolutionary meaning, and (2) recontextualised in everyday collective rituals (de Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak, 1999: 154). It is interesting to see, during the process of ‘Updating’ (2010-2012), the combination of two new strategies of historical remembrance. While *Granma* rarely publishes old discourses of Fidel Castro during the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991), they became a common feature in the paper’s front page during the call to the VI Congress of ‘the Party’ (2010-2011). Another strategy that was introduced during the period of ‘Updating’ is the incorporation of a timeline that summarises important historical event that happened every day of the year. The table appears in the last page of the paper and serves as a mechanism for reinforcing collective historical remembrance. Both strategies can be seen to be promoting historical unity between Cuban heroes and the readers.

The association of nationalism, human dignity, and morality has been present in Cuba's media regulation since Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship (Rivero, 2015: 110). Over the first few years of 'the Revolution', the usefulness of political and ideological debates was substituted by the achievement of a '*radical morality*', led by Fidel Castro's personal view of humanism. However, Guerra (2012) argues that humanism was replaced by a '*messianic call*' to replace the old morality by a new revolutionary one, based on values such as '*courage, selflessness, and unwavering faith*'. This chapter has shown that Fidel Castro himself became an example of moral guidance, but a guidance that had its ultimate origins in the 19th-century independence heroes.

Final Remarks

Applying a Laclauian perspective to the study of discourse in Cuba, I have argued that the concept of 'the Revolution' has become an 'empty signifier', that is, a magnetic idea that is able to bring fragmented popular demands together. Though populist and nationalist discourse, popular demands have been transformed into a coherent set of shared ideas that can be mobilised at once. The revolutionary project has lost some internal coherence since 1959, and has been 'emptied' of its original meaning in order to accommodate new articulations of 'the Revolution'. However, the power of empty signifiers relies precisely on their lack of clarity. In Kapcia's (2014: 182) words, the ambiguity of 'the Revolution' has been essential for consolidating '*its mobilising power and collective identity*'.

Given the 'emptiness' of the revolutionary project and the fluctuation of discursive articulations, the leadership has faced the task of periodically renewing the hegemonic meaning of 'the Revolution'. Since 1959, Cuba has faced different moments of crisis that have called the legitimacy of 'the Revolution' into question. Periods of crisis have often correlated with hegemonic campaigns aimed at renewing the meaning of 'the Revolution', and the social consensus around it (González García, 2012; Kapcia, 2014).⁶³ These campaigns illustrate top-down attempts to reinforce collective unity in times of crisis, articulating 'the people' in a fight against a bureaucratic caste, as well as an external threat.

⁶³ A good example of a state-led campaign is the so-called 'Ten Million Ton Sugar Harvest' ('*La Zafra de los Diez Millones*'), launched in 1969 by Fidel Castro. Another example is the 'Rectification of Mistakes and Negative Tendencies' ('*Rectificación de Errores y Tendencias Negativas*') that was implemented in the mid-1980s and ran in parallel to the Soviet 'perestroika' and 'glasnost'. We can also cite the 1991 announcement of a 'Special Period in Time of Peace' ('*Periodo Especial en Tiempos de Paz*'), which prepared Cubans for a period of survival after the disintegration of socialism in Central and Eastern Europe; or the 'Battle of Ideas' ('*La Batalla de Ideas*'), a nationalistic campaign that aimed at mobilising citizens to bring the child Elián González back to Cuba after his mother died in the raft that was to take both of them to the United States.

Historically, the leadership has used two main strategies for renewing the hegemonic meaning of ‘the Revolution’: (1) it has constructed a discursive unity between ‘the Cuban people’ and ‘the Revolution’, (2) it has created a hubristic enemy that threatens people’s wellbeing. Whenever there has been a threat –real or perceived–, ‘the Revolution’ has used what LeoGrande (2008: 54; 2016: 54) calls the ‘*rally round the flag*’ effect, asking citizens to stand together in the defence of the nation, and the ‘*state of siege*’ effect, demanding that citizens stand together in the defence of ‘the Revolution’. De Diego Romero’s (2003: 160) analysis of Fidel Castro’s legitimisation strategies between 1959 to 1970 (personal charisma, appeals to patriotism, opposition to a clear enemy and a regime of constant popular mobilisation) are not unlike the four clusters used by the Popular Party in the United States, which is considered one of the forefathers of modern populism (Kazin, 1995: 11). This reinforces the view of populism as having clear nodal points that articulate discourse in different temporal and geographical settings.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion II. The Disarticulation of Unity

In the previous chapter, I have examined the way in which Cuban newspaper *Granma* has articulated a discourse of people-Party unity during periods of national debate. This chapter examines the way in which the hegemonic discourse of unity has been disarticulated in the newspaper. The first section looks at the way in which the hegemonic construction of a bottom-up national debate has been challenged. This is examined in both periods of analysis, that is, during the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991), and during the ‘Updating’ of the Cuban economic and social model (2010-2012). This idea is further examined in the third section, which unveils the official limits to debate. The final section looks at the role of the media in the disarticulation of the unity of ‘the people’ and ‘the Party’ through national debate.

In the context of authoritarian countries and transitional democracies (Zielonka, 2015; Voltmer, 2013), this chapter highlights the importance of allowing a certain degree of internal criticism in order to manage internal dissatisfaction. It demonstrates that debate can be used as a top-down strategy for consensus-building while maintaining an appearance of pluralism. However, it also highlights the limits of hegemonic articulation: the Cuban case illustrates that official discourses can be challenged even within the state-owned press.

5.1 - The Hegemonic Construction of Debate

I have explained in section four that popular debate is presented in *Granma* as a process of hegemonic renewal, as an opportunity for ‘the Party’ to listen to popular demands, and to restate their ability to deal with confusion and discontent within the institutional system. In this sense, both congresses coincided with catachrestic propaganda campaigns, the ‘Special Period in Time of Peace’ and the ‘Updating of the Cuban Economic and Social Model’. These campaigns are broad enough to encompass multiple demands, and to promise redemption, while maintaining the stability of the revolutionary project through the maintenance of the nodal points that articulate equivalential chains of inclusion and exclusion.

Participants in debates are constructed as representing the totality of ‘the Cuban people’. However, the group is later disaggregated into smaller categories, each of which has a different

role. In other words, subjects are structurally positioned within the debates by ‘the Party’, *a priori*. Because of this structural position, which is imposed on them, participants are enrolled in power relations that restrict their ability to influence the final outcome of the debate.

For instance, party leaders are repeatedly given the role of opening, guiding, and closing the debates. This means that they have the capacity of explaining the agenda of topics, of giving voice to participants, and of summarising debates. In the provincial assemblies, role division appears more explicit, since most participants are members of ‘the Party’, and the rest of ‘the people’ depend on a Party invitation. This division between leaders and the common people is clearly acknowledged in the opening day of the Havana assembly, where it is stated that the results of that debate are of particular importance, and that the rest of the debates will have less influence in setting the discussion agenda during the Congress.

The argumentative circularity of debates is clear from the outset, given that ‘the Party’ elaborates the draft, organises and leads debates within revolutionary institutions, publishes the values and attitudes that are expected from participants, states the basic limits of debate, decides the amount and extent of people’s input and has the ultimate decision-making power. While ‘the Party’ insists on an institutional articulation of ‘the people’ to include each citizen’s opinion, it is not clear to what extent any participant’s input will change the original draft. As the headline ‘*Only what the people make theirs*’ indicates, participants are expected to internalise the message during the time leading up to the Congress (*Granma*, 9 April 1990).

The data shows that *Granma* construct debate as open, democratic, combative, sincere, thorough, and lengthy (Schlachter and Sanz Fals, 20 January 1990). The quality of debate is emphasised in news stories through argumentative appeals to quantity, and to openness. First, there is a special emphasis on presenting quantity as quality, and the newspaper presents the number of interventions and the length of debates. For instance, in *Granma*’s provincial assembly there were 57 interventions which lasted 7 hours (Camacho and Marta, 16 June 1990), while in Guantánamo there were 76 interventions, and the debate lasted 12 hours (Pérez Hechevarría and Cardosa Arias, 20 June 1990).

Second, debate is presented as diverse. For instance, in Ciego de Ávila the paper reports a polemical, direct, clear, sincere and open debate, rich in perspectives (Shelton, 21 June 1990). The article concludes that different opinions were all guided by the same goal, to strengthen ‘the Revolution’. The last clause implies conditionality, as diversity is allowed, as long as it is based on shared revolutionary goals and assumptions. In this sense, there is an articulation of diversity strengthening the revolutionary project, following an ‘every and all’ fallacy. Overall, Fidel Castro

concludes that debates have been critical, mostly focused on flaws and problems, and that all topics have been discussed in depth in ‘the Party’s’ closing ceremony of the provincial assemblies (Pagés et al., 26 February 1991).

However, the data indicates a certain degree of criticism. During the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991) *Granma* published several articles questioning the prevalence of unanimity and consensus in the first assemblies of debate that took place in the early 1990s. On 9 April 1990, about a month into the call, an anonymous journalist called into question the overwhelming unanimity of the first few meetings in an interview with Carlos Aldana, secretary of the Central Committee. The journalist considered that the assemblies had been useless, beyond a mere reaffirmation of support. In response, the leader acknowledged peoples’ overwhelming support for the call, but considered that popular consensus is not artificial. Instead, unanimity just mirrors the ability of ‘the Party’ to represent people’s demands:

J: Quite the opposite [the leader has not digressed]. I understand and share your points, but in fact the first few conferences that discussed the Llamamiento have become classical service assemblies, when not statements of support without any further consequences.

R/ We know that. It is too early to draw conclusions from a few examples, but I agree that we should react to those signs. In my opinion, those episodes just confirm the fairness of what the Llamamiento lays out, the need to reflect upon the methods and the working styles of the Party. Being aware of those risks, the norms have been sufficiently flexible and open so as to welcome the most diverse options, including the possibility of celebrating different meetings within the same organisation and avoid that a good debate, or the need for in-depth clarification, become subordinated to a marathon logic, or to exhaustion by inertia. (Granma, 19 April 1990)

A few days later, ‘the Party’ published a news story on the front page in which it criticised both the unanimity of the first debates, and the way in which they were covered in the press. ‘The Party’ acknowledges three elements that undermined the debate. First, the confusion between expressing support for Fidel and ‘the Party’, and the fact of using assemblies as a place for mere revolutionary reaffirmation. While unity is necessary, people can express different criteria regarding the problems that ‘the Revolution’ faces, and how to solve them. Second, ‘the Party’ acknowledges a lack of involvement due to misunderstanding. Some participants were wrongly told that the document would not be modified, giving the impression that opinions are not

important. However, ‘the Party’ insists in the evaluation of all ideas (although the text is not to be rewritten). Third, ‘the Party’ reports that it will extend the period of debate, so that all workers can prioritise productive tasks (*Granma*, 13 April 1990).

During the process of ‘Updating’ (2010-2012), popular disagreement during debates is implied in a few news stories. For instance, *Granma* reports that a considerable amount of disagreement and worries came from the debate over Guideline 162, chapter 6 (which deals with the elimination of the ration book). However, people’s opinion is dismissed by the journalist, who writes: ‘*In our opinion, it was not understood that this is exactly what the Guideline means when it says to “Implement the orderly removal...”*’ (Varela Pérez, 7 December 2010).⁶⁴

This is not the only instance in which people’s comments and ideas are dismissed and de-emphasised in the newspaper as a simple misunderstanding of the guidelines. However, some popular ideas for introducing new guidelines are paid special attention to, such as those asking for a strengthening of protection against ‘the enemy’. For instance, a militant from a factory considers that there should be a guideline aimed at stopping ‘the enemy’ from stealing Cuban sportsmen (Rodríguez Delis, 6 December 2010).

5.2 - Discursive Changes

In chapter one, I have highlighted the confusion that the end of the Cold War generated in people’s minds, after decades of associating ‘the Revolution’ to prosperity, rather than collapse. Therefore, the ‘*linear discourse*’ of ‘the Revolution’, ‘*the elliptical morality tale that the Revolution was constructing in terms of this scenario*’ was challenged in the arts and literature by a ‘*massive jigsaw puzzle where the pieces never quite fit*’ (Quiroga, 2005:10-11).

Quiroga (2005) considers that the ‘Special Period’ had a catastrophic impact on the work of Cuban writers, due to the lack of material resources and the collapse in the number and length of publications. However, the scholar considers that towards the end of the decade, Cuban artists had made strides in freedom of expression, publishing and discussing the work of previously banned authors, or those who were part of the diaspora (Quiroga, 2005:14). However, the negotiating power of Cuban writers was greater than that of journalists, even reaching an agreement with the government that allowed them to publish abroad, while living on the Island.

⁶⁴ The sentence to “*Implement the orderly removal...*” appeared in quotation marks and bold print in the original.

The data shows that the difference between popular debates during the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991) and the process of ‘Updating’ (2010-2012) is clear from the same conceptualisation of the Congresses. While in the early 1990s the Congress was conceived as an opportunity for debating both economic and political issues, the VI Congress was conceived as having a purely economic focus. Therefore, economic and political debates were separated in two different events: The VI Congress of ‘the Communist Party of Cuba’, with a call that would debate the ‘guidelines of economic and social policies’, and the I National Conference of ‘the Party’, which allowed an internal discussion of political affairs restricted to party members.

In both periods, the methods of the Cuban Communist Party are constructed as floating signifiers that can be differently articulated depending on the context. Methods are therefore not nodal, and not essential to the hegemonic project (Calzadilla and Morales, 17 January 1991). This allows discursive changes within the revolutionary consensus. In the same news story, a leader explains that methods are the means, and not the ends. Therefore, ‘the Party’ can change its methods, and even its discourses, without diverting the aims of the revolutionary project.

The lapse of time between the call to debate to the Congresses, and the celebration of the Congress, is different in both periods. In the early 1990s, 19 months go by, characterised by an economic and ideological disruption as a consequence of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialism. However, during the process of ‘Updating’ (2010-2012), only 5 months separate the call from the Congress in a period of relative calm. This difference is key to understanding the greater evolution of discourses during the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991), while discourse remains more coherent (more fixed) during the period of ‘Updating’.

The analysis of news stories over the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991) reveals two key moments in which discursive changes become clear. The first change comes in late August 1990, after the paper announces special measures to cope with the economic hardship arising from the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Cuba’s main commercial partner. The announcement leads to a significant increase in the use of the term ‘Special Period’. Other discursive changes become visible starting from early 1991.

The second discursive change comes after the National Assembly meeting in late December 1990, which increased the focus on punishing economic crimes. While in 1990 there was a prevalence of the use of the term ‘indiscipline’, in 1991 the preferred term is ‘*delito*’ [delinquency], which presupposes a punishable violation of law. In fact, there are only two news stories that mention delinquency before 1991. One of them announces the decision of the National Assembly (7th Period of Ordinary Sessions, 1990) to strengthen the legal punishment of

delito, and to modify the Constitution accordingly, (25 December 1990). Economic delinquents are articulated not only as enemies of socialism, but of human progress. Therefore, Fidel Castro explicitly supports punishing this type of crime:

And he [Fidel] stressed: if the Party tightens up as much as it should, then my hands will hurt from applauding. I fully support that.

The fight against those who do not fulfil their services, the fight against thieves and resources' embezzlers, and the fight against delinquents, I applaud it with all my forces, because they are enemies of socialism, enemies of human progress. (Varela Pérez, 24 January 1991)

Throughout the 'Special Period' (1990-1991), there is an increasing focus on the role of Fidel as the ideological chief and guide, whose words will guide people towards victory (Gabriel Gumá, 12 November 1990). It is important to highlight that the call to the Congress was announced by Raúl Castro, while Fidel was abroad on a trip to Brazil. While often visible on the front page, Fidel had kept a low profile in news stories related to the Congress, something that indicates a certain distance between the leader and 'the Party'. The content analysis reveals that the use of images of Fidel increases significantly in 1991 (from nine images in 1990, to thirty-six in 1991), as well as references to Fidel's quotes (from twelve to thirty-eight).

The political discussion of the methods, styles and structures of 'the Party', as well as political and mass organisations culminates between October and November 1990, when 'the Party' announces a series of measures regarding the structure and organisation of 'the Party', as well as other essential transformations. From that moment on, political comments are limited to party leaders' conclusions to debates, reminding people that a renovated Party is already working on solving problems. In early January 1991, there is a short summary of the achievements of the previous year, under the headline '*IV Congress of the Party: Proposals come true*' (*Granma*, 2 January 1991). This highlights the fact that political changes are already under way and, therefore, do not need to be further discussed during debates. Discourse changes quickly, and there is only a short lapse of time between the acknowledgement of the problems and deficiencies, and the improvement and even resolution of some of them. Suddenly, workers have a new spirit, are more efficient; scientific and technological advances promise successful crops; the structure of 'the Party' is rationalised and reinvigorated, everything looks positive and optimistic 'despite' the great dangers. This is coherent with the Cubans' alleged historical ability to face problems with a renewed spirit.

5.2.1 - The ‘Special Period in Time of Peace’

The ‘Special Period’ is constructed as a continuation of the independence wars, one century later. In a news story, *Granma* (23 February 1991) recovers a quote from José Martí in which the leader defines Cubans as ‘upright men’ (*hombres enteros*). This same value would apply to all Cubans of all times:

We are, nowadays, a people made up of upright men, which following the path that started in the Demajagua, in Baraguá, are swelling with pride, dignity, and patriotism in the face of difficulties and threats, and have decided to maintain their Independence with the same energy with which those Cubans, on a 24 February, decided to conquest it, following Martí’s call. (Granma, 23 February 1991)

Mentions of a possible ‘Special Period in Time of Peace’ start early on after the call to the IV Congress. The first mention appears on 16 March 1990 (*Granma*, 16 March 1990). From the outset, the ‘Special Period’ is conceived as a strategy that will allow Cuba to cope with the economic hardship that could result from the crisis in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. However, often most references to the ‘international situation’ are rather vague.

The newspaper takes more than 3 months to mention the ‘Special Period’ again in a news story related to the Congress.⁶⁵ The ‘Special Period’ is not mentioned again until 23 June 1990, in the reproduction of the Political Bureau’s agreement (*Granma*, 23 June 1990). In the agreement, the Bureau recognises that the state of emergency in Cuba is due to international problems. The international crisis might pull both ‘the people’ and ‘the Party’ into a survival mode. Therefore, all existing plans might have to be changed by the circumstances, and there is one single priority: defence (*Granma*, 23 June 1990).

Granma constructs unity as a coordinated defence by ‘the people’ and ‘the Party’ against a deadly shared threat. In doing so, it creates a collective sense of threat through emotive appeals to the crowd (*ad populum*), which must remain united in order to survive. However, this is a snob appeal to the crowd in which ‘the Party’ leads the path, and encourages ‘the people’ to follow it. It is interesting to see how historical determinism is constructed by a syllogism fallacy, by which following the ‘revolutionary path’ in a ‘heroic effort’ will once again ensure the victory over ‘the

⁶⁵ The ‘special period in time of peace’ will be referred to as the ‘special period’ for practical purposes. This is also how *Granma* refers to it in most news stories.

enemy'. While the 'Special Period' becomes a euphemism of economic scarcity and ideological isolation, it also becomes a way of ensuring survival. The following quotation illustrates these points:

The assemblies in which the call will be discussed will be a platform for debate in which we can lead the aggression, we can argue in depth all our reasons and demonstrate how, amid exceptionally complex conditions, uncertain and risky, our political leadership follows a revolutionary path and encourages all the people to undertake a heroic effort that must guarantee our survival and our development even in the most adverse circumstances.

An excellent opportunity has been offered to us so we can overcome once again the confusion of ideas caused by the disaster in oriental Europe, as well as the events that are taking place in the Soviet Union, which the imperialist propaganda is using in order to denigrate socialism and establish an unprecedented ideological and psychological siege against Cuba. (Granma, 23 June 1990)

In this excerpt, the 'Politburo of the Central Committee' ('*El Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba*') offers the first articulation between the 'Special Period' and 'the enemy'. The crisis in the Soviet Union is presented as changing world order correlations, feeding the arrogance of US imperialism, which is waiting to deliver the death blow. There is an implied idea that the enemy is delighted by the 'the Cuban people's' suffering, and succumbs to evil moral values. At this time, the front page and international coverage is focused on the US 'TV-aggression' towards Cuba, after the launch of TV Martí in March 1990, and the recent US invasion of Panama in December 1989. While this is not directly mentioned in the excerpt, it is implied in the nature of US attacks (*Granma*, 23 June 1990).

In the early stages, the 'Special Period' is articulated through the use of modal verbs of possibility, and passive voice. The narrative situates Cuba as a country that might be dragged into a 'Special Period' because of external circumstances, which can intensify the will of 'the enemy' to destroy the country. The last reference to a possible hardening of the 'Special Period' appears on 8 October 1991, in an interview to Esteban Lazo. Overall, the balance is positive and citizens are reassured that, while everybody will struggle with austerity measures [*racionalización*], nobody will be abandoned.

But we are in Cuba, revolutionary and socialist, where the social and economic regime based on the interests and the active support of the immense majority of the people allows us to face these huge difficulties, which can be greater, without

abandoning the people to their fate, not even one person, and lead and manage what we have, and whatever we have in each moment with courage, wisdom and maximal rationality so as to be able to resist and to continue developing ourselves. (Camacho Albert, 5 October 1991)

The ‘Special Period’ is never formally announced as such, but it is unofficially declared in late August 1991. On 27 August, the MICONS publishes a note on the front page in which the government announces the scarcity of fuel, and a couple days later there is an official explanation of the special measures that will be taken in consequence, as well as a discourse by Fidel Castro under the headline ‘*Still in a Special Period*’. In fact, the ‘Special Period’ is only mentioned in five news stories related to the Congress before August 1990.

One of the main discursive changes consists of the euphemistic construction of the ‘Special Period’. Over the first few months, the ‘Special Period’ is constructed as a threat to the nation, mobilising people’s fear around productive goals. Party officials consider it their duty to protect people from adversity, which requires both production and defence. For instance, military leaders promise to defend people from ‘*the highest challenge in history*’, a ‘Special Period’ in which ‘the enemy’ is ready to attack any time (Camacho Albert, 28 January 1991). However, 1991 brings about a rearticulation of the ‘Special Period’. The new meaning is visible in the following quote from Fidel Castro: ‘*If it was not for the special period, we could have done more, although maybe the special period has also helped us to do things better*’ (Camacho Albert, 19 February 1991).

In this excerpt, the ‘Special Period’ shows two new articulations. First, it diffuses and externalises responsibility for the current economic problems (not just old mistakes). Second, and more importantly, the ‘Special Period’ is also constructed as something that has advantages. This quote in early January was followed by a discursive rearticulation of the ‘Special Period’, which is framed not just as a threat, but as an opportunity. The ‘Special Period’ is increasingly presented as a historic opportunity to continue ‘improving’ (*perfeccionando*) Cuban society, to restore the best values of workers, such as compromise, effort or rigour, to work altogether in a shared national effort, motivated by the best incentives: victory, and survival (*Granma*, 8 February 1991). This leads to different reports in which the gravity of the problems is downgraded. For instance, on 22 January 1991 *Granma* chronicles a town that has undergone 24 hours of a full ‘Special Period’ programme, which includes zero-fuel consumption. The news story is written in a narrative style. It is playful and funny, and downplays the severity of the measures that were applied. The ironic language, very rare in news reports, can be seen in this chronicle, written following the Cuban tradition of ‘poetic witchcraft’:

In neighbourhoods, you could see animal-powered ambulances and many heard the new joke in Manatí: only one person was unemployed the day of the special period trial. It was the driver of the hearse, since nobody required its services that day.
(Batista Valdés, 22 January 1991)

Prospects are optimistic, and the joy, the enthusiasm and the energy of mobilised workers and students is spreading across the countryside (*Granma*, 4 February 1991). On 17 January 1991 *Granma* publishes a news report that explicitly mentions the ‘Special Period’ in the headline, something that is usually avoided. The headline reads: ‘*Faced with the challenge of the ‘special period’, communists ratify their will to win*’. The headline states people’s goal to achieve the most efficient sugar harvest in history, in a clear historical reference to Fidel’s mythical goal to achieve a ten-million-ton sugar harvest in 1970. Given that this goal was never reached, the mobilising ability of the ‘Special Period’ is magnified, able to bring unprecedented levels of effort, strength and productivity, and ensuring the best agricultural results in Cuban history (Calzadilla et al., 17 January 1991).

The focus on improving economic performance despite, and in part, thanks to, the ‘Special Period’ is gradually emphasised in the news, thereby constructing a lack of proportion fallacy. If, in January 1991, Party officials promised to double production, by February there are calls to triple and even quadruple it (Más et al., 12 February 1991; *Granma*, 19 February 1991; *Granma* 4 February 1991). Other propaganda campaigns are also launched throughout the country, calling for an extraordinary effort on the Red Sunday (*Granma*, 5 November 1990), and an intensive 45-day work camp called the ‘ultimate effort’. Mobilisations are presented as a sports contest, with enthusiastic and excited participants taking part. The following headline offers an interesting example by which suffering is euphemistically transformed into excitement: ‘*Joy became devotion to work. Public rallies on construction sites and brigades in honour of the IV Congress. A 45-day mobilisation called the ultimate effort*’ (Ramírez Alonso, 12 June 1991).

In the spirit of the moment, *Granma* starts publishing news stories that offer advice on how to deal with scarcity. These news stories euphemistically normalise and downgrade the hardships that citizens are enduring throughout the ‘Special Period’. For instance, in a news story, citizens are asked to rescue traditional culture, defined as home cooking of food for self-consumption, as well as traditional recipes (Calzadilla et al., 17 January 1991) while other news stories praise the environmental advantages of using bicycles, as is practised in Scandinavian countries.

5.2.2 - 'Updating' Cuban Socialism

Socialism is articulated in both periods as an unstable signifier. In this sense, it is integrated in an equivalential chain in which 'the Revolution', through socialism, becomes the sole guarantee of social justice. While socialism was externally threatened in the early 1990s by the collapse of the Soviet Union, 20 years later the socialist project was still threatened by a series of Party-led economic reforms that seem to contradict some of the main socialist principles. Therefore, the compatibility between the new economic guidelines and socialism needs to be discursively constructed in news stories. First, socialism and social justice are reaffirmed as guiding principles, as Marino Murillo explains below:

Marino Murillo remarked that the economic policies set by the country should bring a solution to the aforementioned problems. Those policies are coherent with the principle that only Socialism is able to overcome difficulties while preserving the achievements of the Revolution. He emphasised that the updating of the economic model will be guided by planning, rather than by the market. (Puig Meneses et al., 15 November 2010)

Soon after, radical changes are denied:

There is no reform, it is an updating of the economic model. Nobody should think that we are going to hand properties over, we are going to manage them in another fashion. (Puig Meneses et al., 15 November 2010)

Finally, socialism is rearticulated. Leaders state that socialism was misconceived in the past and wrongly interpreted as equal social rights for everyone. However, economic idealism has damaged socialism, generating abuses and delinquency. In a situation of economic hardship, egalitarianism is no longer sustainable, and 'the possible' will limit 'the ideal'. Therefore, social expenses will be maintained within economic possibilities, rather than granted (*Granma*, 20 December 2010).

During the process of 'Updating' (2010-2012), Raúl Castro's discourses emphasise the rationalisation of resources. While in the debates that preceded the IV Congress rationalisation was framed as necessary for survival, during the VI Congress rationalisation is presented as a guiding principle of the economic and social 'update'. For instance, the Minister of Economic Planning, Marino Murillo, acknowledges that certain productive tasks can be more efficient when managed as cooperatives, rather than by the state (Puig Meneses et al., 15 November 2010).

Furthermore, guideline (*lineamiento*) number 16 contemplates the dissolution of unprofitable state-run companies.

Early on in the debate, and given the concern of several participants about the creation of cooperatives in other sectors, Murillo said that many among us have not seen them beyond agricultural production and, furthermore, they would not be recognised by law. Updating the economic model implies modifying several legal regulations as well. Murillo considered that there is room for cooperatives in small businesses, in the service sector. ‘...since there are things that do not work under state-owned methods. But that needs to be done in an orderly fashion’. (Puig Meneses et al., 15 November 2010)

Interdiscursivity can be observed in the high levels of overlapping between the goals of ‘the Party’ and the goals expressed by ‘the people’ in selected quotes. For instance, a retired 66-year-old woman considers that the State cannot continue subsidising all products, and that the solution is to increase food production in Cuba (Duarte et al., 11 November 2010).

The focus on rationalisation is also extended to intellectual production. Therefore, Social Sciences are affected by the rationalisation of resources, and required to work closely with companies so as to produce practice-oriented research. Similarly, Díaz-Canel announces that there is an excess of research focus on Humanities, and that university registrations will need to match economic and social needs, as stated in art. 51 of the 1976 Constitution.

Finally, the focus on reinstitutionalisation can be observed in the use of the rule of law as legitimisation. Both Raúl Castro and other leaders make references to the Constitution and to the rule of law in their interventions. There is also a renewed emphasis on the importance of lawyers in the application of the ‘guidelines’ (*lineamientos*), as well as references in opinion articles to the fact that nobody can be above the law (Sánchez Serra, 19 November 2010).

5.3 - Official Limits to Debate

In *Granma*, the Political Bureau addresses the worries of some cadres and leaders regarding the limits of debate. Limits are not denied, yet cannot be set *a priori*. The only limits that ‘the Party’ provides *a priori* are very much in the line of ‘Words to the Intellectuals’, welcoming any opinions from within revolutionary belonging (Oramas, 5 April 1990). Therefore, all opinions are restricted to a set of inalienable revolutionary values, which are inferred rather than exposed.

Therefore, 'the Party' invites all Cubans to discuss, and express their demands and worries in a process of internal debate in which discourse is meant to change. This change will be a way of rearticulating hegemonic consensus around 'the Party', which will clarify doubts, and attempt to convince 'the people' of the soundness of its guidelines. The goal of debate is clearly stated as '*consciously reinforcing and reasserting*' the positions of 'the Party', '*our positions*' (Granma, 23 June 1990).

The first few experiences of analysis of the call have exposed the worries of some Party leaders and cadres about the limits of debate. Those limits, of course, relating to the content and the reach of proposals cannot be fixed a priori. It is not possible to find in the text the concrete answers to each problem. The goal of the discussion is, precisely, to promote criteria based on the experience of militants and the people, with the goal of finding out the dissatisfactions and concerns susceptible to be clarified, as well as alternatives that will improve our work.

In consequence, the document tries to favour a consensus that must arise from the discussion itself, from the confrontation of criteria and the clarification that it should bring about. The main goal for the Party is to clearly know the inalienable values that we defend and to be ready to explain and to reason in depth all our points of view. (Granma, 23 June 1990)

While calls for citizens to express their opinions and criteria during debates are common, these are conditional on an inferred set of conditions that tend to appear afterwards. This strategy is often used for claiming complete freedom, while restricting it in a different clause. The tendency consists of an inferred premise of 'belonging' which, when stated, reveals the internal contradiction of the overall argument. The contradiction often appears in the same paragraph, or soon after. However, this contradiction can be intertextual. For instance, some calls expect journalism to openly '*reflect the richness of social thought*' (Rubio, 29 May 1990), while others prioritise the fulfilment of Party-led information policies.

The data suggests that citizens' right to express their opinion is always conditional on two elements: it should be timely, and expressed within the right channels. The debate of the draft indicates the right setting for letting out previously inhibited and repressed passions so that they can be either integrated or extinguished within institutional channels. This was intended to avoid a rearticulation outside the channels of revolutionary consensus (Granma, 23 June 1990).

Some official limits to debate are clearly laid down in the newspaper. This is particularly clear in a news story that promotes open debate under five conditions. (Granma, 23 June 1990). The first

condition is socialism, which is linked by analogy to an indissoluble unity with ‘the Revolution’ and national independence. Socialism is constructed as people’s historical choice, able to synthesise all Cuban fights for over a century, as well as the only guarantee for social justice (*Granma*, 23 June 1990). Socialism is another value that cannot be called into question. Socialism is presented as a free choice of ‘the Cuban people’, who value social justice. Extending the chain of equivalence, socialism is defined as a signifier that synthetises a century of popular struggles. In the context of the ‘Special Period’, socialism ‘*implies the indissoluble principles of the Revolution, socialism and national independence*’ (*Granma*, 23 June 1990). The second condition of debate is the single party, a party of Martíán, Marxist-Leninist inspiration, based on democratic centralisation (Calzadilla et al., 17 January 1991).⁶⁶ The role of this party is to keep a permanent connection to ‘the people’, to which it is accountable, so it can successfully lead society (*Granma*, 23 June 1990). The single party is articulated in juxtaposition to an alien multi-party system. While the Communist Party of Cuba is presented as an essential unifying force, pluripartidism is described as naturally divisive; while the single party is democratic, pluripartidism is anti-democratic and corrupt; while the single party is endogenous and ensures national independence, the US neo-colonial regime imposed a multi-party system as means for the foreign domination of Cuba (9808). In a Manichaeian move, the article clearly states two options, ‘the Revolution’ and the counter-revolution. According to this schema, any attempts to propose alternative ideas that collide with party directives can be accused of being divisive and, therefore, counter-revolutionary (*Granma*, 23 June 1990). While the role of the single party is overstated using a lack of proportion fallacy, arguments are presented through emotive language and a black-or-white Manichaeian fallacy:

This debate allows us a great occasion for highlighting a concept that we cannot, in the name of anti-dogmatism and elimination of the mistakes of socialism, accept.

The new reactionary dogma says that there is no democracy and renewal without pluripartidism. In Cuba, the multi-party system was precisely used by imperialism for applying its neo-colonial domination to divide the country, ravage it and impose on the people corrupted regimes and anti-democratic tyrannies. The unity of a single party, fruit of the Revolution, was what brought us democracy, real citizens’ participation in all matters, full national sovereignty and the political and moral cohesion of the people. The survival of the country and of the Revolution depends upon this unity. A blocked, threatened, harassed country such as ours will commit a

⁶⁶ The adjective Martíán refers to Cuban intellectual and revolutionary José Martí, who led the insurrection against Spanish colonial rule during the Cuban War of Independence. Martí is referred to in the official discourse as the ‘apostle’ of Cuban Independence.

tragic and definitive error if it fragments its forces, because in our case there is only room for two fundamental parties: that of the Revolution, and that of the counter-revolution. (Granma, 23 June 1990)

The other conditions that are implied in the article are the maintenance of national unity through patriotic arguments *ad populum*, in the face of an external threat (Granma, 23 June 1990). The article considers that, besides these values, there should remain a wide space for debate that allows for the strengthening and ‘improvement’ (*perfeccionamiento*) of the country:

In order to preserve these values and essential principles, and precisely with the goal of strengthening them, we should recognise the existence of a sufficiently broad space for discussing topics related to the improvement [perfeccionamiento] of the country’s political life, the work of state institutions, cultural and informational policies, the development of our theoretical line of thoughts, particularly in the field of social sciences. (Arencibia, et al., 26 June 1990)

The attitude of participants can be a challenge at debates either for falling short, or exceeding ‘the Party’ guidelines; or for being overly backwards, and holding on to a mentality from a bygone era, or for being too radical, and advocating for ‘*stupid, absurd, unreal theories*’ (Varela Pérez et al., 24 January 1991). While these attitudes are denied in Granma on 24 January, they are acknowledged soon after by Machado Ventura on 28 January. The leader admits that some people are worried about the levels of criticism reached in debates, distorted by the foreign press. He reassures ‘the people’ that nobody has asked for pluripartidism, nor capitalism (Arencibia, et al., 26 June 1990). This is remarkable, since only a few days before, the Political Bureau had established the single party, and socialism, as non-debatable.

Despite an initial emphasis on free debate, Machado Ventura in an interview on January 1991 restates the official limits, criticising those who went too far. The leader reminds supporters that opinions should by no means be divisive, nor undermine the work of ‘the Revolution’:

There have been those who took advantage of this framework to say things out of context and which in certain occasions did not receive the adequate answer and were misinterpreted [;] due to the lack of previous preparation, some thought that it was enough to listen and to write down all the opinions, which is incompatible for revolutionaries since they should not oversee anything that could damage or mislead about the achievements of the Revolution.

Overall, what is important and relevant is the positive assessment of the process, the support to the Party, to the Revolution and to the First Secretary of our Party, compañero Fidel. It was, for those who go around talking about a referendum, a referendum in support of socialism, aside from that with a right to debate. (Ricardo Luis, 28 January 1991)

During the process of debate that preceded the VI Congress of the CCP, Ricardo Alarcon, President of the National Assembly of People's Power, establishes a contradiction by which all citizens are free to speak their mind, yet freedom is conditional to one of the main historical values of Cubans, responsibility:

That is the difference, here we discuss it altogether. The actions that we undertake will be decided at the Congress, but a Congress in which all the people participate; and Raúl has not stopped insisting on the people to freely express themselves, to say what they think. When I think of freedom, I remember a sentence that my old teacher, Juan Marinello, liked to use, when he said that 'all freedom is a big responsibility'. (Granma, 18 December 2010)

People's responsibility is historical, constructed through a nativist discourse of continuity that extends between the aboriginal Indians of the Caribbean to 'the Revolution'. While Raúl insists on the benefits of free, democratic debate, this freedom appears subordinated to five centuries of historical efforts.

If we want to save the Revolution we need to accomplish our agreements, and not allow after the Congress –as has happened until now in many significant cases– that the documents sleep an eternal sleep in the drawers, as was explained during these days in the debates, fruitful, democratic and truly in depth. That is the way we want the people to continue discussing those Guidelines, and there are about 100 days to do that. We either rectify or the time to keep avoiding the abyss is over; we sink, we will sink, as we have said before, the effort of entire generations, from the Indian Hatuey, who came from what it is today the Dominican Republic and Haiti –first internationalist in our country–, until Fidel, who has admirably guided us through very complicated situations since the triumph of the Revolution (Applause). (Granma, 20 December 2010)

Other contradictions can be identified in media discourse. For instance, while a journalist acknowledges that it is not realistic to expect overwhelming unanimity in debates, ‘the Party’ expects debates to construct a solid agreement (Pérez Betancourt, 2 December 2010).

5.4 - The Role of the Media in the Debates

In revolutionary Cuba, the role of intellectuals (artists, writers) and journalists lies in the assumption of a full compromise and a relationship of trust with ‘the Party’. Such belonging guarantees intellectuals the right to criticise that which can be ‘rectified’ (Núñez Betancourt et al., 16 June 1990). For instance, in both periods journalism is presented as providing open, in-depth, critical, and analytical information about debates, allowing people to fully participate in all revolutionary battles. Nevertheless, these tasks are limited from the outset, since journalists need to fulfil these roles with responsibility and revolutionary soundness.

The Cuban media is called on to fulfil two fundamental roles. First, the promotion of debate and criticism as a means of internally improving ‘the Party’, and second, the promotion of an unbreakable popular unity, a unity that connects citizens to the rest of the nodal points that make up the primary chain or articulation: the nation, ‘the Revolution’ and socialism. These media roles are highlighted during debates, but the use of the passive voice makes these ideas non-attributable:

It was also requested a more active role of the press in objective information, the dissemination of judgements with the right nuances. It was also emphasised that, in the current circumstances, the role of the press should lean towards the creation of awareness about our revolutionary fight, and the promotion of the unyielding unity of the people. (Gabriel Gumá et al., 4 June 1990)

In May 1986, Fidel Castro discussed with journalists changes in the Cuban media model inspired in the spirit of the 1980s ‘rectification period’, as well as a new information policy. In 1970, journalists met at the Union of Cuban Journalists (UPEC) in a plenary session where they discussed the progress of the process (*Granma*, 28 May 1990). Julio García Luis, then head of the UPEC, conveyed journalists’ ‘*unquestionable loyalty to the Revolution*’ and revealed some of the topics discussed, such as the need for a media law and a realistic coverage of national reality. However, there are several elements that suggest the lack of visibility of journalists’ opinions on their own professional roles.

First, there are very few references to journalist opinions during debates, and in those few instances they are speaking in their capacity as party delegates or militants, rather than as professionals or as individuals. For instance, an article reveals heated discussions between journalists at the UPEC meeting, in which they evaluate their problems from a critical and self-critical perspective, and hold confronting points of view. However, *Granma* does not offer specific information on the points that led to disagreement (*Granma*, 28 May 1990).

Second, when the role of journalists is mentioned by party leaders, it is addressed only superficially. Journalists are called on to be more creative, and to acquire a better knowledge of the work of the ‘apostle’ José Martí (Oramas et al., 11 June 1990; Jiménez et al., 28 June 1990). According to the hegemonic discourse, the leadership is not interested in listening to journalists’ demands, but fosters an instrumental role of journalism. For instance, Carlos Aldana, secretary of the ‘Central Committee’ (*‘Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba’*), called on journalists to follow the priorities of the information policy, which they should help to improve through practical suggestions, and to contributing to the socioeconomic development of the country in the existing difficult situation (*Granma*, 28 May 1990). The article ends with an encouragement to increase journalist professionalism, which is articulated in consonance with their political and ideological interests. However, it reveals a contradiction between journalists’ ability to fulfil their professional goals, and their difficulties accessing sources of information (*Granma*, 28 May 1990).

References to freedom of speech explain that ‘*there should be no limitations in the exposure of criteria*’ (Rassí, 22 March 1990), and that the media should keep track of everybody’s suggestions in order to transmit them to ‘the Party’. In this sense, the media are constructed as a mediating institution by which party guidelines can be disseminated to all citizens, while citizen opinions can be published and reach ‘the Party’. While ‘the Party’ calls for criticism and analysis, these calls are rather vague. What is clear, instead, is the role of journalism as clearly aligned with the ideology of ‘the Revolution’ (Pérez Betancourt, 2 December 2010). Similarly, ‘good’ artists and intellectuals are described as those who contribute to the debate of socialist ideas.

The role of the Cuban media is to help ‘the Party’ construct a broad consensus around revolutionary changes before congresses takes place. In other words, the Cuban media are called on to assist ‘the Party’ in an internal, institutional rearticulation of changes. Political and media discourse in 1990 is very much in the spirit of the process of ‘Rectification of Mistakes and Negative Tendencies’ adopted after the III Congress of ‘the Party’, in 1986. The dominant discourse acknowledges a dark period of censorship throughout the 1970s and invites

intellectuals, the media, and citizens to overcome it. In this sense, *Granma* considers that different points of view within ‘the Revolution’ should no longer be seen with suspicion or mistrust. Only opinions that might politically divide or disperse the revolutionary efforts go beyond the limits of belonging, and be articulated as promoting the interests of ‘the enemy’.

In early stages of debate, there is a coordinated effort by ‘the Party’ and the newspaper to present debates as genuine and free, and unity as a desirable result that comes from people’s critical identification with party proposals. There are several articles that criticise unanimity, and a few examples that go as far as to challenge the consensus reported in debates, disclosing the mechanisms by which unity is falsely constructed.

The joint efforts to set apart false unanimity from a desirable unity between ‘the people’ and ‘the Party’ are repeated in political discourses, news stories, and editorial content. In the opinion piece ‘*Should there always be unanimity?*’ the author acknowledges the double standards of some people, who have certain ideas but vote for something different (Rubio, 29 May 1990). This is relevant in the light of *Granma*’s coverage of the first few analyses of the Llamamiento in factories, which consistently highlight the overwhelming agreement of the workers with ‘the Party’ despite leaders’ encouragement for free expression of disagreement.

Unanimity, according to the opinion article, could be the result of collective pressures, as well as self-censorship. In the past, unanimity would have been encouraged through the use of coercion (rather than repression). Therefore, those participants might still fear the consequences of public dissent. The author uses different strategies to downplay the reasons that drive party leaders, cadres and militants to promote a forced unanimity. For instance, the specific consequences or coercive methods are silenced, as well as the agents applying them; and the word ‘*coercion*’ is substituted by a euphemism: ‘*compulsion*’ (Rubio, 29 May 1990).

The contradiction between what ‘the Party’ states about debate, and how the media covers those debates is apparent from the outset. What remains unclear is what is stopping participants and journalists from fulfilling the critical and analytical role expressed by ‘the Party’. Throughout the coverage, there are some suggestions that would motivate the contradiction between party calls to dissent, and the coverage of an overwhelming unity. Some elements could be the lack of preparedness of cadres, the lack of a culture of debate, and the fear accumulated over years, of forced unanimity and distrust of those who express divergent opinions, even within the revolutionary line. The lack of study of official documents leads to a lack of readiness, and to purely formal assemblies that repeat rather than analysing party messages. This can be seen in the excerpt below:

The fear that some feel and which, coincidentally, has been justified by reprisal and coercion, is added to the insufficient arguments exposed for and against, and which instead of favouring an abstention –considered unfairly and erroneously as a stigma, as an ideological problem, as political weakness by some–, give shape to a partial information that does not contain sufficient nuances and, therefore, leaves little room for choice. (Rubio, 29 May 1990)

In both periods, unanimity is perceived as a formalist and false mechanism that obliges people to adopt double standards, hiding their true opinion (*Granma*, 16 March 1990). Instead, ‘the Party’ welcomes the expression of diverse criteria at a given moment, discussed ‘democratically’ through a range of available internal mechanisms. While full consensus is dismissed as ontologically unachievable in both periods, people-party unity is welcome. Therefore, ‘the Party’ relies on ‘[t]he certainty of counting on the overwhelming support of the people’ (*Granma*, 16 March 1990). It is the certainty of unity that guarantees the institutional articulation of popular demands within Party-led revolutionary channels. For instance, Raúl Castro denies artificial unanimity, yet assumes everyone’s will to continue building socialism, and ‘improving’ (*perfeccionando*) socialist democracy (Blanco et al., 16 June 1990).

If the call to debate clearly expresses people’s support to ‘the Party’, to what extent can those participating in debates feel free to disagree with a document drafted by ‘the Party’? (Rubio, 29 May 1990). On the one hand, ‘the people-party’ unity could protect freedom of speech by ensuring the revolutionary belonging of all participants. However, people-party unity could also perpetuate unanimity as long as disagreement can be articulated as a danger, or as non-belonging. Despite a certain degree of media criticism, newspapers do not address the contradiction between citizens’ ability to express dissenting opinions, while they are called to stay united to an equivalential chain composed by ‘the Party’, Fidel Castro, ‘the Revolution’, the nation, and socialism. The wide reach of this equivalence implies that disagreement with one single element can be seen to be divisive, and a threat to the stability of the whole set. This could induce the creation of discursive and practical strategies for diffusing personal opinions and responsibility, while reinforcing collective will.

In a news story covering regional debates, a military leader ironically improvises a list of common linguistic strategies by which personal decisions are presented as collective, and then used for hiding negligence and avoiding personal accountability. The first strategy is the use of plural forms and first-person plural ‘us’, to avoid speaking in a singular, personal way. The second is the construction of unity as shared responsibility, using the set phrase ‘we are all

responsible here’, and therefore avoiding personal responsibility. The third is the use of sentences such as ‘*we are working towards that direction*’, implying good intentions while avoiding responsibility for the achievement of the goals (Granma, 8 June 1990). All these strategies are common in national newspapers construction collective unity, as discussed in chapter four.

According to the data, cadres and lower-ranked party leaders have also developed other strategies for avoiding direct responsibility, whether fearing coercion or simply as political opportunism. In an opinion piece, the author considers that the pervasiveness of voting on every measure has become a strategy by which political leaders avoid personal accountability. When a vote is conducted, it is presented as if ‘the people’ had spoken, and decided; therefore, individuals cannot be held responsible.

5.5 - Discussion: The Disarticulation of Collective Identity

Lillian Guerra (2012: 5) considers that early wholehearted support for ‘the Revolution’ began to fade after the first decade of government. Therefore, ‘*the grand narrative that gave mass participation meaning began subsuming individual encounters with history and the power derived from them to uniform analysis*’. However, it is in the 1990s that most scholars identify a widespread exhaustion of the revolutionary promise. Guerra (2012: 2) explains that the rhetoric of national redemption was losing its unifying power, and the country saw an increasing popular awareness of the political roots of people’s fate. However, the scholar argues that the end of the Cold War left Cubans so isolated and uprooted that redemption was quickly recovered as an anchoring element, as an empty signifier. National redemption became, contentiously, both an exhausted and an accommodating discourse during the ‘Special Period’ (1990-1991). The scholar narrates her experience as follows:

By the time I arrived in Cuba, this historically rooted story of national redemption was undoubtedly disintegrating, but it also still served as the common anchor of a society left adrift in rough political seas. Long accustomed to defining cubanidad according to positions of allegiance or opposition to this narrative, island Cubans experienced a profound disorientation with the end of the Cold War. (Guerra, 2012: 2)

Cuban citizens, and intellectuals among them, did not completely become alienated by the official discourses of 'the Revolution'. Instead, a great deal of resistance came from the Cuban tradition of humour and rumour, the so-called *choteo* and *bolas*. These strategies became early appropriated by revolutionary intellectuals, who saw themselves as legitimate members of the project and, therefore, able to make their voice heard whenever the pace of changes did not fit their ideals. Such intellectuals were called on to embrace their ideal revolutionary values of rebelliousness in the 'Rectification' debates of the mid-1980s.

Endowed with the status of a vanguard, these young people issued critiques of the state as intrinsic to the Revolution's defence. They attacked the limits that the state imposed on their own freedom to express and define revolutionary faith in literature, film, theatre, and art. (Guerra, 2012: 8)

On the one hand, critiques from within targeted the contrast between the original revolutionary ideals and the distorted way in which individuals had applied them in practice. They did not call the legitimacy of 'the Revolution', nor that of the government, into question. Instead, the focus was on individuals' responsibility, on self-criticism rather than structural problems. On the other hand, criticism from within was rooted in the revolutionary ideals of freedom and social change, providing them with alternative meanings. Guerra (2012) argues that these counter-narratives were essential for keeping alive the original radical spirit of 'the Revolution'. The counter-narratives of Cuban dissidents, revolutionary intellectuals, young members of the communist youth and dissatisfied workers managed to create spaces of debate that were largely invisible to the general public. This is why Guerra (2012:31) calls all cultural production under 'the Revolution', including that of the press, '*palimpsests*'. These palimpsests were made up of multiple layers of meaning in which contradictions, disagreement, and subjectivity, were more or less successfully coated by the official discourse, yet left visible signs of their trace:

Because their stories were silenced, elided, or covered up by the grand narrative of the state, the process of revolution itself can best be understood as a political production of palimpsests. (Guerra, 2012:31)

5.5.1 - The Logic of Equivalence versus the Logic of Difference

According to Ernesto Laclau (2005a), a certain degree of populism is inherent to politics, as all political projects appeal to a unified people against an enemy. However, the degree of populism

depends on the extent to which existing political structures are able to satisfy citizens' demands. When individual demands cannot be successfully satisfied through existing institutional channels, they tend to aggregate themselves around an anti-status quo, antagonistic discourse that separates the popular will from the anti-popular nature of the system. This is, from a Laclauian perspective, the precondition for the appearance of populism.

However, this thesis does not consider populism from a reductionist perspective, as the only possible logic of articulation of popular demands. On the contrary, the data indicates that the Cuban Revolution has kept its hegemonic power through the simultaneous combination of logics of difference and of logics of equivalence. In other words, 'the Revolution' has managed to keep its unifying power through the combination of institutional and populist articulations of popular demands. What has prevailed then, the totalising, or the differential articulation of popular demands?

On the one hand, the data indicates that the leadership has externalised problems through the (re)construction of an external enemy, the United States, which hinders the revolutionary leadership from successfully satisfying popular demands. In this sense, popular demands have been articulated through a logic of equivalence, unified against a shared enemy. 'the Party', and more notoriously the leader, have managed to present themselves as representing the will of a unified people through the emptiness of 'the Revolution'.

On the other hand, the leadership has simultaneously managed to channel a great degree of social discontent through hegemonic interventions, aimed at avoiding dislocation through the acknowledgement of a series of problems that can be solved through the internal mechanisms provided by the system. In times of crisis, the data shows that popular demands have been articulated in differential chains, and 'the Party' has expanded the spaces of negotiation and debate so as to accommodate the surplus or unsatisfied citizen demands.

The combination of these two mechanisms has allowed 'the Revolution' to keep its unifying power while allowing a rearticulation of meaning around stable nodal points ('the people', 'the enemy', the leader, the nation, and journalism). However, articulations are inherently unstable, open to contestation and rearticulation. In this sense, the data indicates that some of the key nodal points that have managed to unify popular demands around 'the Revolution' have lost their cohesive force, becoming floating signifiers and, therefore, available for a hegemonic rearticulation.

In the literature review, I have explained how two logics of political articulation discursively manifest themselves. On the one hand, institutional articulations tend to highlight the diversity of subject demands through a syntagmatic discourse in which demands are combined with each other, preserving their difference (Laclau, 2015a: 159). On the other hand, populist articulations tend to exalt equivalence through relations of substitution in which demands are aggregated around two antagonistic poles, a homogeneous people and a homogeneous enemy. The process of aggregation takes place through different rhetoric devices, such as catachresis, which occurs when one specific demand passes as representing the whole totality of popular demands.

The early construction of a unified people, represented by Fidel Castro and embodied in Che Guevara's notion of a 'new revolutionary man', managed to build equivalential chains of popular demands. Through a process of catachresis, all subject demands were presented as revolutionary demands, unified against anti-revolutionary forces, and represented by the leader, losing their specificity and therefore becoming, blind to class, age, race, religion and gender. All non-revolutionary subject demands were, therefore, either absorbed by chains of equivalence, that is, revolutionised, or antagonised as anti-revolutionary and anti-popular.

The literature on populism suggests that the construction of 'the people' is often assimilated to the construction of the nation. Therefore, the populist discourse represents not only popular interests, but also national interests. In the case of Cuba, the data indicates that 'the Revolution' was assimilated to the nation, the final step for true independence of Cuba from foreign powers. 'The Revolution' was also assimilated to 'the people', to the triumph of popular demands over elitism, corruption and repression. Finally, 'the Revolution' was assimilated to socialism, first Soviet-like Marxism-Leninism, and then the search for a Cuban-inspired model.

In this sense, Rojas (2010) considers that the identification between the nation and the state, and between the leaders and 'the people', has favoured an official framing of political dissent to be disguised as anti-patriotic. In the words of the Cuban-American scholar, academic works need to make visible the hegemonic articulations of meaning that have prevailed over time:

Revolution cannot mean the same as the Homeland, the nation or socialism, nor can it function as just another metaphor of power –Fidel, Raúl, the Party–, or as another name for the regime, for the community, or for the country. (Rojas, 2010: 297)

5.5.2 - Populism and the Establishment

Most scholars consider that empty signifiers can be embodied in the figure of a leader that manages to represent all popular demands. However, these empty signifiers can also be embodied in a specific construction of 'the people', so that a part of the population can successfully embody the totality of popular will. In the case of Cuba, the data indicates that Fidel Castro has become a unifying leader, able to connect to the wishes of the masses and to articulate popular demands against the United States. However, some scholars consider that understanding populism as a discourse implies that the existence of a charismatic leader, while facilitating the construction of internal frontiers, is not essential. If the existence (although not always the success) of a populist discourse is considered as independent from a charismatic leader, it would then be possible to understand why, despite the succession of a charismatic Fidel Castro by his pragmatic brother Raúl, the media discourse has remained stable.

Populism is often defined as emerging from popular frustration against the establishment (Canovan, 2005; Laclau, 2005a). In this sense, when popular demands cannot be incorporated into a discursive or political system, this dislocation produces frustration against this system, that is, against the establishment. In the case of Cuba and other long-term populist articulations of unity, such as Hugo Chavez's Venezuela, the early construction of antagonism was clear, as the new leadership opposed both an internal threat, represented by elitist hegemonic forces, and an external threat, constructed around US imperialism. However, what was once a new, revolutionary leadership has become over the years institutionalised, hegemonic. The question that arises, then, is how to construct a leadership that remains close to 'the people'. In the case of Cuba, how has the revolutionary leadership managed to articulate popular frustration around a non-revolutionary enemy?

According to the literature, populism consists of the construction of an antagonistic discourse between 'the people' and the dominant powers (Laclau, 2005a). It is an attempt to rearticulate hegemonic discourses around a new core, which manages to temporarily represent all popular demands. That is what the Cuban Revolution did in its early days. 'The Revolution' managed to become an empty signifier, able to represent all popular dissatisfaction and to promise a new articulation of power relations. Over time, however, revolutionary leaders themselves became the dominant powers, the dominant ideology, and the dominant discourse. Who then was 'the enemy' that threatened the realisation of popular demands? The analysis of party-people unity reveals that the revolutionary leadership has managed to externalise elitism (represented by pre-revolutionary

elites, or foreign powers) while constructing the Communist Party of Cuba as a genuine anti-elitist force.

Kaplan (2010: 262) contends that processes of discursive articulation cannot be purposively managed by political agents. While populist articulations undoubtedly take place, he argues, they cannot be ascribed to the purposive actions of willing agents. However, the data indicates that, while the early phase of articulation of popular demands was spontaneous and contingent, the revolutionary leadership managed to co-opt such articulations at an early stage, fixing and unifying its meaning through hegemonic political interventions, such as the 'Special Period' or the socioeconomic 'Updating', which were publicly disseminated through the state-owned media.

In the Cuban context, the data indicates that the revolutionary leadership has used hegemonic interventions and periodical widenings of 'belonging' through national debate as mechanisms for avoiding structural dislocation. First, hegemonic interventions present leaders as aware of national problems and unsatisfied popular demands. Second, interventions promise an internal solution to collective problems. Third, national debates enable the leadership to listen to, and to co-opt popular demands and excluded subjectivities, which can then become rearticulated. This can be seen in the insistence on clarifying people's doubts and convincing citizens during debates. However, the focus on institutional channels of problem-solving is accompanied by the externalisation of unsolvable problems, reinforcing a populist confrontation with the external enemies.

The data indicates that the internal management of popular demands has been conducted through the combination of four different but complementary strategies. First, frustration has been externalised through a populist discourse that fixed and (re)constructed an external other, dually represented by the pre-revolutionary establishment, and by the threat of US imperialist ambitions. The combination of these two threats was embodied in 2010-2011 by the Cuban diaspora, especially those Cubans who migrated to Miami, who represented the pre-revolutionary order, and who clearly allied themselves with the evil goals of the United States. Second, frustration has been internalised through internal channels of negotiation and debate. Third, popular frustration has been periodically co-opted and rearticulated through Party-led, hegemonic interventions. Finally, non-satisfied demands have been physically expelled by allowing frustrated subjects to leave the country.

5.5.3 - The Exhaustion of Populist Discourse

Some scholars consider that Cuba is experiencing a structural and systemic crisis, which entails a decline of social consensus and a deterioration of citizens' trust in the media (García Lorenzo and Pérez, 2012; Marrero, 2013; Elizalde, 2014). The Party-led mobilisation of 'the people' in times of crisis has been used in different moments with the goal of rearticulating national consensus. This was also the case of the call to debate that preceded the VI Congress of the CCP in 2011. Official data indicates that almost nine million Cuban citizens participated in debates on economic, educational, health, sports and transportation policies. Many scholars highlight the strong popular involvement in the debates that took place at schools, universities, working centres, communities, and neighbourhoods. However, some consider that the level of criticism that these debates reached was not matched by the decisions that were made in the Congress, generating frustration, and dissatisfaction (González García, 2012: 22). For instance, Cuban researcher Carolina de la Torre (in Hernández, 2008: 284) believes that the output of popular debates goes through multiple filters, so the strongest opinions end up diluted and all that reaches the congresses of 'the Party' is *'the United States are imperialist, and Socialism is better'*.

Overall, one of the main problems of the 2010-2011 debate was the visibility of public debate in the mass media, so citizens only knew what was debated in the meetings they attended, rather than being able to apprehend the richness of national debates. Information was scarce, and expert discussion rare (González García, 2012: 23). However, journalists would have not been responsible for this situation, since the Party restricted their access to the debates. At the beginning of the debates, the government entrusted the supervision of media production to a Commission of Implementation. The stringent control of news coverage of the 'Updating' was a key element in the thesis of María Luisa González. The student found that journalists who covered the VI Congress of 'the Party' in 2011, and the I National Party Conference in 2012, were repeatedly denied access to relevant information (González García, 2014). These findings indicate a generalised political mistrust of the professional judgement of journalists, even of those that had received official clearance by 'the Party'. Felix López, a journalist covering the events for the main official newspaper, *Granma*, remembers that officials would go in the media room and turn off the television screens in the middle of plenary sessions, interrupting the broadcast of discussions and leaving journalists in the dark (in González García, 2014).

The limited access to public information, and to alternative sources, influences journalists' ability to reflect the different strands of opinion among citizens, and also within 'the Party'. Previous research shows that the mainstream media systematically follows the Party-led media agenda and

the official news angle, rather than professional news values. For instance, Claudia Pis Girola concluded in her analysis that newspaper coverage of the 2013 elections of the National Assembly of People's Power was designed so as to foster unity around 'the Revolution', rather than to inform citizens about the debates taking place among members of Parliament (Pis Girola, 2014).

Several academic theses identify the Party-led design of the media agenda, which translates itself into a generalised lack of analysis and interpretation in the coverage of the reforms (Cabrera Morejon, 2014; Guía Delis, 2014; Medina Orama, 2014). Guía Delis (2014) pinpoints in her research that news stories about the 'Updating' of the model are mostly instrumental for propaganda, as they follow the unidirectional guidelines traced by 'the Party' in terms of topics, sources, timing, and levels of accepted criticism. According to this body of research, analysis and interpretation are virtually absent in the news coverage of the reforms, and journalists seldom offer explanations to their audiences regarding the economic and social implications that new policies could have, both on their everyday life and for the future of the country.

In most cases, Cuban students and researchers attribute the deficient media coverage to the excessive control of 'the Party' over the news agenda, and to the naturalisation of certain habits in the newsrooms, rather than to journalists' own wrongdoing. In this sense, González García (2012) concludes that changes have not materialised in practice due to a lack of consensus among key political and social actors at all levels. Therefore, the 'update' of the Cuban media would require not just the right socio-economic context, but also political will and legal guarantees. Cuban researcher Abel Somohano (2013) concludes in his thesis that there will be no real changes in the way in which Cuban media operates unless those advocating for 'true socialism' allow a democratisation of communication practices. For him, Cuban society needs to transcend mere debates and to implement effective changes, strengthening the institutional framework under which journalists operate, and incorporating the effective participation of the citizens in decision-making. In Julio César Guanche's (2012: 172) words, what Cuba needs is to go beyond market reforms and to democratically radicalise socialism.

5.5.4 - The Disinstitutionalisation of Public Debate

The low connectivity in Cuba has fostered citizen reappropriation of digital technologies in a way that could not be anticipated by leaders. Therefore, citizens' creativity has configured parallel online and offline networks for the dissemination of information and entertainment, such as the 'weekly package' (*el paquete semanal*), which are distributed through USB, CD and DVD

devices; chains of emails (since Cubans have access to their emails in their smartphones), or downloadable PDF versions of non-institutional publications, among others.

There has been a sustained increase in citizen spaces of debate online since the turn of the century, but more particularly since the proliferation of blogs around 2008. These virtual spaces have allowed the appearance of non-institutionalised spaces for debate. In effect, they have facilitated the horizontal confrontation of ideas, the coordination of collective action for social change, the ‘disintermediation’ of public information, and citizen control of public management (Díaz Rodríguez and Firuzeh Sokooh, 2013: 63).

The ability of Cuban intellectuals to open spaces of debate that circumvent official channels can be seen in the massive exchange of emails on the ‘*Quinquenio Gris*’ (the ‘Grey Quinquennium’) that took place in January 2007. After national television broadcast interviews with some leading politicians that leveraged the 1970s repression against intellectuals, such as Luis Pavón, some of these intellectuals started expressing their discomfort. Some of the ideological victims of this period saw the programmes as a public homage, and started sharing their experience and indignation with colleagues by email. The debate took such a magnitude that a few emails became chains of emails, and the debate lasted for weeks. Fornet (2007) acknowledged that public reflections upon the ‘*Quinquenio Gris*’ were delayed, as many others were, in order to avoid damaging unity. However, the Cuban scholar considers that silence has been more dangerous to ‘the Revolution’ than the external enemy. They have promoted, he argues, a fake unity that has distorted the nature of popular support.

It was the magnitude of spontaneous email chains that managed to unravel this postponed debate. In late January, the cultural institution *Casa de las Américas* organised a conference aimed at bringing some of the protagonists of the virtual debate face to face. In his opening speech, Cuban intellectual Desiderio Navarro (2007: 3) denounced the ineffectiveness of Cuban public and institutional spaces for debate, including the mass media, which gave no coverage to this matter. Therefore, he considered that email chains had become not an alternative, but a substitute space for debate, given the absence of alternative channels (Navarro, 2007). These ‘peripheral public spheres’ (Leyva and Somohano, 2008: 53) offer active subjects the space for articulating not just critical views, but also discourses with a clear political and transformational goal. Some scholars argue that there might be a relationship between this episode and Raúl Castro’s discourse on 26 July 2007, publicly encouraging more public debate (Leyva and Somohano, 2008).

Under Raúl Castro’s leadership, there have been small but symbolic steps that demonstrate a certain political will to promote investigative journalism, and journalists’ access to sources. For

instance, the newspaper *Juventud Rebelde* has published two edited books that gather examples of good journalism. Both volumes are inspired by the idea of an ‘uncomfortable revolutionary journalism’ that defies triumphalist and complacent accounts of reality, as well as journalists who feel too comfortable (those *acomodados*) producing them. For instance, Acosta Matos (2007: 8) finds the first volume a challenge to ‘*indolent, indifferent, tired, arrogant, opportunistic*’ people, to mediocre people with power, to those ‘*politically short-sighted*’ and ‘*essentially reactionary*’ who delay, consciously or not, social change. In the second volume, Garcés (2008) encourages the reconciliation of Cuban journalism with reality, and with people’s daily struggles. While he acknowledges that publishing critical news stories can feed the enemies’ will to undermine Cuba’s strength, he considers that this is a risk that must be taken, and circumvented.

Juventud Rebelde encourages the exercise of a professional and responsible journalism, the same way other ‘uncomfortable’ journalists favour ‘respect’ and ‘morality’ as key values that should guide the work of Cuban journalists (García Luis, 2005; Toledo Sande, 2014). Such values are not invoked as restrictive, but as liberating, as professional values that ensure the compromise of Cuban journalists with ‘the Revolution’ and, therefore, the ability of the government to trust journalists’ professional criteria. Moral awareness is, therefore, perceived as essential in a future transition towards self-regulation. Furthermore, the leadership of ‘the Party’, along with the collaboration of the Union of Cuban Journalists (UPEC), has been holding meetings with the board of directors of governmental and administrative organisations. Some scholars argue that these meetings have improved journalists’ access to news sources, improving the accountability of ‘the Party’ and fostering greater pluralism (Marrero, 2013).

Final Remarks

Chapters four and five have analysed the articulation and disarticulation of ‘the Cuban people’ during the periods of national debate that preceded the IV (1991) and the VI (2011) congresses of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC). These chapters have focused on the way in which the Cuban institutional newspaper *Granma* articulates the hegemonic revolutionary discourse. This is interesting, since Cuban newspapers are part of the political system, yet are called upon to promote critical debate. In chapter one, I have argued that the media system was designed for a country that was in a permanent state of war with the United States. This view influenced the way in which journalism was conceptualised in the early revolutionary years. As all media outlets became institutionally linked to the Communist Party of Cuba, or mass organisations, the press became an ideological tool.

In chapter four, I have argued that *Granma* followed the official discourse, constructing a collective identity, 'the people', united in a fight against an external enemy. The newspaper constructed 'the Cuban people' as 'a common people' that could become 'historical heroes' and win endless battles against 'the enemy' through the mediation of the revolutionary leadership. This catachrestic transformation, to use Laclau's term, implied citizen's compliance with a series of revolutionary roles and values, producing what Guerra (2012) calls a collective 'elliptical morality'. This combined not just a populist discourse, but also a nationalist discourse and an 'oracular' use of historical destiny (Quiroga, 2005). However, chapter five has demonstrated that the hegemonic articulations of 'the people' have been called into question even in the official press.

Chapter 6: Findings III. Journalists’ Rearticulation of a People-Party Unity

The thesis develops Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s (1985) work on Discourse Theory, which is systematised through a combination of qualitative methods of analysis: discourse historical analysis, discourse theoretical analysis and in-depth interviews. However, my work goes beyond discourse, presenting a historical examination of the structural and material conditions that have influenced the production and circulation of news in Cuba. According to one key finding, the press has challenged the hegemonic discourse of the Party in times of debate. It is possible, therefore, to find arguments that undercover the limits of top-down debate, and which denounced the mediated fabrication of false unanimity. However, the contestation of the hegemonic discourse goes beyond what is printed in the press. One of the main arguments of this chapter is that Cuban journalists, like other intellectuals, have developed strategies of professional resistance from within. This chapter contributes to the understanding of the role of journalists not just as passive supporters of system, but as critical actors that accumulate an often-imperceptible potential for change. Finally, it highlights the importance of academia as mediator between new and old media actors.

This chapter examines the hegemonic construction of ‘the Cuban people’ through the lens of Cuban journalists. While the sample of the interviews is not representative of the journalistic community as a whole, the aim of the chapter is to study the recontextualization and transformation of a particular political discourse –the hegemonic discourse of ‘the people’ as presented in *Granma*– in another domain of society: in a specific life-world. While the analysis of Cuban newspapers demonstrates the degree to which populist and propagandistic messages are entrenched in the press, I argue that it is essential to go beyond the analysis of media content, and to understand it in the context of wider historical, material, political, and organisational elements. In this chapter, this is achieved through qualitative interviews with journalists and media scholars and discussed in the light of current academic debates on Cuban journalism.

This chapter has two main sections. The first section focuses on journalists’ discursive reappropriation of the nodal points that have historically sustained the hegemony of the revolutionary project. The second section analyses the elements that have historically constrained journalists’ ability to fulfil their professional ideals. In the first section, I argue that the way in which journalists position themselves within the hegemonic media discourse is essential for

unveiling potential contradictions that can lead to a discursive change. For instance, the data indicates that journalists are challenging the hegemonic discourse, such as the unity between ‘the people’ and ‘the Party’, the obsession with an external threat, the progressive values of ‘the Revolution’, and the understanding of journalists as soldiers. The consolidation of digital media projects means that journalists have nowadays a space for disseminating alternative articulations of collective identity, challenging the discursive hegemony of the institutional media.

In the second section, I examine the reasons for why journalists commit to political projects that curtail their professional ideals, and civil rights (Guerra, 2012). The data suggests that this apparent contradiction responds to a combination of material, organisational, ideological, and emotional factors. Therefore, I argue that journalists’ collaboration with the institutional media system and the reproduction of populist constructions of collective identity can be explained by four main factors: (1) the deprofessionalisation of journalism –understood as material hardship, lack of professional authority and generational discontinuity–; (2) the naturalisation of external control –whether administrative, political, ideological or economic–; (3) journalists’ multiple and often contradicting identification with ‘the Revolution’ –as well as the chain of signifiers attached to it: nationalism, socialism or social justice, among others–; and the internalisation of a series of revolutionary roles and values –such as compliance, faith or optimism.

6.1 - Journalists’ Rearticulation of Revolutionary Discourse

The goal of this section is to look at the way in which Cuban journalists and media scholars reflect on the nodal points that have historically articulated the revolutionary project in the institutional media. Cuban intellectuals have been promoting cultural and artistic debates –known as ‘Cultural Polemics’– since the early days of ‘the Revolution’, and 1961 Fidel Castro’s ‘Words to the Intellectuals’ are just one example. In chapter one, I argue that the erosion of revolutionary values started in the late 1960s, with the death of Che Guevara in Bolivia, economic stagnation, and failure of the hegemonic campaign of the ‘Ten Million Ton Sugar Harvest’. The idea of a longstanding erosion of the hegemonic discourse is further analysed in chapter five, which illustrates the way in which the institutional newspaper *Granma* has challenged the official construction of ‘the Cuban people’. In fact, the ideological and economic crisis of the ‘Special Period’, caused by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, fostered greater separation between ‘the people’ and ‘the Party’, intensifying processes of collective de-identification and re-identification within ‘the Revolution’.

6.1.1 - The Roots of Journalists' Professional Demands

The perceived erosion of the hegemonic revolutionary discourse can be identified in the interviews. While this erosion is not new, the data reveals journalists' unprecedented awareness of the distance between 'the people' and 'the Party'. For instance, an experienced editor in chief confesses that, for the first time, the renewal of popular consensus has become an urgent matter (RC4).⁶⁷ According to this view, the Cuban institutional media are no longer able to mediate between the concerns of 'the people', and the official political discourse. The mutual estrangement between citizens and those in power puts the institutional media in a complicated position: they have to choose between representing the interests of 'the people', or those of 'the Party'. However, the excessive external regulation of the media means that they have in fact no choice but to follow the official discourse. This results in a loss of credibility of both the media, and the political system.

The worldview rupture between social reality and official discourses means that the subordination of the institutional media to 'the Revolution' is endangering the revolutionary project, rather than reinforcing its hegemony. This is the argument of a senior scholar, who considers that the Cuban media model is counter-productive to the fulfilment of an '*ideal*' and '*prosperous*' socialism (RC19). The interviewees consider that the media can only contribute to a survival of the revolutionary project through a structural change (RC16; RC3; RD23; RB13). The following excerpt is an example of these concerns:

[C]urrent communication policies in Cuba are far from ideal and, therefore, far from solving the need of the fluid, up to date, and adequate communication model that citizens demand in the new context of transformations that came with the updating of the socialist model. (RC19)

Journalists' demands for changing the institutional media system have their historical roots in the debates that were held during the 'Rectification of Mistakes', in the mid-1980s.⁶⁸ Senior interviewees reveal that Cuban journalists started claiming professional autonomy from 'the Party' early on, along with the rest of intellectuals. The greatest moment of hope and perceived agency, according to them, came with the Party-led promotion of open debate during the

⁶⁷ Journalists are identified with codes that indicate their approximate age. For more information, these codes can be consulted in Annex IV.

⁶⁸ The 'Rectification of Mistakes and Negative Tendencies' is further discussed in chapter one.

‘Rectification of Mistakes’, which took place roughly between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s. The interviewees who graduated during this period seem particularly committed to the spirit of openness and criticism that the ‘Union of Journalists’ (‘*Unión de Periodistas Cubanos*’, UPEC) and ‘the Party’ encouraged in their 1986 and 1985 congresses, respectively.

Some prominent academics express their longing for a period in which they were able to report breaking news, and to write about citizens’ concerns (RC9; RA14). A former well-known television journalist, who graduated in 1987, describes the eighties as a memorable period in which she would wander the streets of Havana, and come back with a scoop: ‘*I would leave in the morning with my camera, and I would even follow the Minister of Industry, if I had to. And I would bring back the news*’, she explains (RC9). The context of economic and ideological crises of the 1990s damaged certain professional practices, and some scholars agree that journalists’ fundamental skill, the ability to cover the news, was lost forever (RC4). Her colleague considers that a reformist spirit of ‘rectification’ settled in the mind-set of journalists, and that this spirit has kept them committed to debate and criticism, using whatever means available (RC4).

The ‘Special Period’ initially came about with an intensification of party oversight that triggered disagreement among some journalists (RC9). Furthermore, harsh budget cuts produced a dispersal of professional journalists, who were either placed in other sectors, or simply fled the country. Those who remained at the newspapers also endured extreme personal and material difficulties that would affect their ability to report on citizens’ problems. A leading scholar recalls the challenges of getting the news in the 90s in the following excerpt:

[W]hat we lost, in a way, was the practical skills that enable you to write informative pieces, to make the news [hacer noticias], because even if there were a lot of interesting stories, there was no way of covering them. (RC4)

Journalists working during the 1990s highlighted their efforts to report on citizens’ concerns, and to keep themselves motivated despite Party calls for national unity in such a ‘special’ moment (this point is further developed in chapter four). Some interviewees that worked in the newspaper *Juventud Rebelde* explained that they tried to outwit propaganda, and endure the curtailment of their professional agency, using an array of techniques. Given the impossibility of accessing sources and covering citizens’ concerns, journalists would use stylistic devices in order to reassert their professional value. Salvaging the spirit of the 1980s-literary journalism, they developed a series of rhetoric devices that allowed them to reshape party propaganda (RC4; RD6; RD10;

RD23).⁶⁹ Some of these devices had comical names, reflecting the use of humour as a coping mechanism. If they had to write about the leader of a Communist Youth League volunteering to cut sugar cane, journalists would engage in ‘*poetic sorcery*’ (‘*brujería poética*’), and play the ‘*lyrical violin*’ (‘*tocar el violin lírico*’).⁷⁰ This consisted of embellishing the dull, official news stories by using wit and creative language to make them more colourful and lively.

The ‘*lyrical violin*’ was often played when covering agricultural news, used during the ‘Special Period’ to disseminate positive experiences on productivity with the intention of boosting people’s optimism. A young journalist and teaching assistant argues that there is an unwritten rule that guides journalistic writing in the official media (RA21). The rule is related to the promotion of an optimistic, moralistic, and triumphalist view of Cuban achievements. With light-heartedness, she offers a typical example of the structure used for boosting morale in agricultural production:

‘Every morning, Perico [diminutive for a common name] gets up to the roosters’ crow and starts planting rice seeds. Just like Perico, fifty farmers of the UAPC Pedro Pérez [arbitrary name for a state farm] ...’. That’s how the article starts. Then, you write a paragraph about Perico explaining his experience: ‘I wake up every morning to the rooster’s crow, but the problem is that I have no petrol for my tractor’. After that, you receive the authorized sources, let’s say, the municipal director of agriculture, who tells you how hard the regional government has been working to solve the problem. And finally, you write the moral of the story: ‘Even if Perico doesn’t have enough resources, Perico works, and his crop gets good results’. (RA21)

A senior journalist recalls government officials ‘herding’ journalists directly to the beautiful fields, distracting them from covering less productive areas of the Cuban economy (RD10). According to a senior editor, the naturalisation of ‘*agricultural lyricism*’ (‘*lirismo agropecuario*’) spread to other topics, becoming a common practice in newsrooms (RD10):

⁶⁹ For an in-depth discussion of 1990s literary journalism in Cuba, especially in the newspaper *Juventud Rebelde*, see Pérez González, 2008.

⁷⁰ The economic hardship of the early 1990s is a very sensitive topic, since journalists had to endure not only budget cuts at the workplace, but also extreme deprivation at home. Some interviewees became visibly emotional when recalling their children going hungry, and having nothing to give them.

We've become completely ridiculous, trying to find beauty and poetry in everything. During the 'Special Period', there was a process of decapitalization where many started improvising various journalism styles. Writing a feature, for example, is very special, very pretty. It's a style that's told through your life, and your emotions. For that reason, there were many people who wanted to write beautiful feature stories on whatever subject: on a meeting, on an assembly, on bureaucratic affairs. (RD10)

The idealisation of 'the Revolution' has produced a 'Panglossian' media construction of society, presenting an idealised image of the country that hides citizens' daily problems, a senior opinion writer considers (RD6). The main problem with this view is that it fails to hold leaders accountable for the dysfunctions of the system. In the face of an external enemy, public self-criticism has been interpreted as potentially damaging for national unity, revealing internal weaknesses to 'the enemy'. Consequently, the media have been forced to offer a rather simplistic, jingoistic account of society, creating '*very repetitive, very transmissive, and very triumphalist*' articulations (RA20).

6.2 - The Rearticulation of Journalists' Belonging

In the interviews, journalists express the erosion of the institutional media through the lens of their personal experience. The interviewees highlight the differentiation between the interests of 'the Party', and those of journalists. Previous literature indicates that the alleged unity between the interests of 'the Party' and those of journalists might have never been fully embraced by the latter. In other words, the boundaries of journalists' identification with the revolutionary project are unclear. While there are signs of shared nodal (or essential) values, such as patriotism, social justice, or dignity, it is at the level of journalistic roles that they manifest the greatest frustration. All the interviewees position themselves within the limits of consensus.⁷¹ In other words, they see their values as compatible with the spirit of 'the Revolution'. In the interviews, journalists working for blogs and for non-institutional media outlets were more vocal about their identity as individuals, and the conditionality of their support. One of these young journalists, whose father died in Angola while on a medical mission, talks about the limits of his loyalty in the following excerpt:

⁷¹ This is not a coincidence. In section three, I have explained that the interviewees' identification with the Revolution (whatever it means to them) has been essential. The goal of the thesis is to examine the Revolution from within, from the institutional press, and from the view of journalists who work within Fidel Castro's 'Words to the Intellectuals': '*Inside the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing*' (Castro Ruz, 1980: 14).

Who should you be loyal to? My loyalty lies with a socialist, left-wing project in Cuba, with a revolutionary project that I call the Revolution. I think that Cubans have fought, suffered, and bled to death for decades for this country. That's my loyalty. My loyalty to the State is conditional to how well I think it is promoting this socialist project. That's why I'm going to praise the governmental management when I think it benefits the project, and I'm going to criticise it if it's damaging it. But my loyalty is towards the project, towards the Revolution. That is where the fork splits. That's where I establish the difference. (RA14)

While these messages are more explicit amongst younger interviewees, the disarticulation of journalists' revolutionary ideals from the official discourse is also present in interviews with more senior journalists and media academics. The following quotes illustrate the way in which a scholar and an editor explain the difference between conscious political compromise, and a forced party-press unanimity:

Sharing a political conviction doesn't mean that you have to behave in a repetitive, mechanic way. They're two different things. This isn't 1968, nothing of what justified what we did back then exists anymore. (RD18)

I think that it goes further than just being a mouthpiece. I personally don't like the word 'official' because I don't feel official. I am a revolutionary man, I am a militant of the Cuban Communist Party, but I am [myself] before everything else, and I don't feel like an official journalist. I feel like a journalist with a social commitment, but with a megaphone in my hand. As Joaquín Sabina [a Spanish songwriter] would say: 'this mouth is mine'. (RD10)

The excerpt above illustrates the compatibility between being a revolutionary, and being critical of 'the Revolution'. This nuance seems clear in the eyes of the interviewees, but can create friction when critical reports are branded as a danger to national unity and strength. A young academic, who also writes a blog and collaborates with a non-institutional digital project, states that the limits of belonging are so blurry that people feel the need to reassert their revolutionary commitment before making any criticism. These fragile frontiers of belonging are reflected in the following lines:

What bothers me most is the fact that any critical discourses have to start with this sentence: 'I am a revolutionary'. Is there a contradiction when someone says: 'I'm revolutionary, but I think this, and that are bad'? If I'm being critical, if what I want

is to improve this [the Revolution], why do I have to state that I'm a revolutionary? I am critical; let them assess that however they please. (RB13)

The excerpts above suggest that the interviewees' willingness to criticise 'the Party' emanates from a sense of legitimacy that is granted by revolutionary belonging. Some might wonder whether those who work within the institutional system can be really committed to change. However, being insiders can represent an advantage, according to the interviewees. For them, staying within the boundaries of 'the Revolution' has the advantage of becoming a legitimate actor, enjoying greater agency in the immediate 'update' of Cuban society. While the data reveals a professional disarticulation from the official discourse of the government, the interviewees also establish a clear boundary between the nature of their criticism, and that of dissidents. A young journalist who works at a non-institutional media outlet positions himself in a grey area of nuances, and shades, which is lacking, according to him, in both the official and the dissident discourse:

The defence of the nation, the defence of a project for a better country, for the people makes you say: 'I'm not going to define myself by who I am, but by who I'm not'. I'm not an official mouthpiece, nor someone that spends his time looking for problems, searching the sun for spots. Because this country is more than Granma, and more than spots. It's so diverse. The good and the bad have so many shades, this is the country of shades. We should make an effort to tell the story of the real Cuba. (RA17)

Dissidents are seen as openly counter-revolutionary, allegedly collaborating with propaganda campaigns orchestrated by foreign governments and, therefore, not committed to the values of social justice, national sovereignty, and collective wellbeing, all elements that are at the heart of 'the Revolution'. The impact of online dissident media projects is considered to be addressed to a foreign audience (mostly the Cuban diaspora), and to have little support and impact on the Island (RA1; RC3).

6.2.1 - Back to 'the People': Journalism and Popular Empowerment

The institutional media has articulated nodal points that help to sustain the hegemony of the revolutionary government. Chapter four has argued that the construction of the state –or 'the Party', since they are presented as equivalential– as representing the true will of 'the people' has

been essential for maintaining a state colonisation of society (see chapter four for a discussion of nodal points in the national press). For instance, article 53 of the 1992 Cuban Constitution establishes that the media has a '*state or social property* (PCC, 1992)'. The ambiguity that lies at the heart of this claim illustrates the official articulation of state and popular interests as equivalential. The following lines will discuss the way in which Cuban journalists challenge the articulation of 'the Party' as a natural representative of a single collective will.

Interviews with Cuban journalists and media scholars suggest that popular unity around 'the Revolution' is still essential for maintaining national independence, and defending a collective project of social justice. However, unity should not come from a top-down imposition of unanimity, but from a public debate in which all citizens discuss the future of 'the Revolution'. The interviews suggest that a renewed, 'updated' media model is an essential element for boosting public debate. Therefore, they advocate for a renewed media model that is accountable to 'the people', rather than to bureaucracy. A new media model would need to ensure the emancipation and effective political participation of citizens in decision making (RA8). A senior academic considers that popular will, rather than Party oversight, is at the core of revolutionary survival (RD23). '*There is a statement from Fidel that says: 'The Party is the sole guarantee of historical continuity', he says. 'I think that it's not. The historical continuity of the Revolution lies in the creation of what we call "a citizen", a person who knows and defends its rights'* (RD23). The importance of popular oversight is further developed by a senior editor (RC16):

The Revolutionary media need to be controlled by the people, and not by politicians. Our Constitution establishes popular sovereignty and, therefore, the media needs to be socially accountable to the people; it has to represent people's interests. Maybe there aren't any insurmountable conflicts between the interests of the people and those of the state, but there is no doubt that there are conflicts. (RC16)

The best way the media can contribute to 'the Revolution' is by holding politicians accountable, according to the young chief sub-editor of a state-owned newspaper (RB25). Such accountability could be achieved by the institutional media '*by speaking out when specific policies divert from the goals Cubans have for their country and their people, when there are mistakes that can damage the credibility of the social project they defend*' (RB25). Furthermore, the sub-editor considers that the media should facilitate a permanent dialogue between 'the people' and the leadership.

At the Union of Cuban Journalists (UPEC), a journalist was more careful in his choice of words. While he stressed the revolutionary responsibility of Cuban journalists, he acknowledged that

citizens have the right to receive information. Therefore, external regulatory bodies [all linked to the Ideological Department of the Communist Party of Cuba Central Committee] cannot decide what information is in the public interest RD2.

The role of citizen-led change in Cuba resonates more in the discourse of those practitioners that work in non-institutional media. These journalists consider that bottom-up (rather than Party-led) change is essential for broadening the spectrum of what can be publicly discussed in Cuba. Since Party leaders claim that ‘the Revolution’ empowers ‘the people’ (see chapter four), demands for growing popular participation can find legitimisation in the official discourse. If the system considers itself democratic, ‘*what can be more democratic than a blog?*’, a young journalist wonders (RA11). Two Cuban bloggers, who also work as independent journalists, agree that ‘the Party’ cannot overtly censor citizen media projects without completely losing its legitimacy (RA14; RB13). For instance, those within ‘the Party’ who have tried to censor independent blogs, such as *La Joven Cuba* or *La Polémica Digital* would have paid a political price for it (RA11; RA20; RA21). Since ‘the Party’ cannot simply shut down all blogs and independent media outlets, it is instead learning how to deal with them, both bloggers conclude. This implies inviting bloggers to engage in face-to-face discussions with decision-makers, and trying to keep them under the revolutionary umbrella.

The self-perception of journalists as advocates for citizens’ rights is a common denominator throughout the interviews. Journalists seem to position themselves on the side of ‘the people’, defending citizens’ rights against a system that is often inefficient, apathetic, and even corrupt. The foreign affairs editor of a national newspaper considers that Cubans’ right to public information should be granted as a right, rather than as a favour. ‘*I need to know how much corruption there is in Cuba, and who the corrupt leaders are*’, he argues (RA1). ‘*It is not a favour, because I have elected you [leaders] to govern. You have not been put there by God, like kings, or anything like that*’, he adds.

The advocacy role is especially important for the journalists that manage citizen’s letters to the editor (RD10; RB22). The most senior editor sees himself as ‘*a democratic journalist*’, as a journalist who promotes the right to be heard (RD10). His emotional involvement with peoples’ struggles was visible throughout the interview, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

I’m a journalist that has done a little bit of everything, but they asked me to do this section, which is very popular in Cuba, and I’ve come to believe that I exercise democracy. I believe it. Maybe then, somebody can tell me that I’m an asshole [comemierdas]. But I think that you have to make citizens’ voices heard. Every day, I

sit here and read fifty or sixty letters. And it's not that I just copy and paste them, like other editors do. I process the letters through my eyes, through my understanding, through my heart. There are journalists here who cover sports; I cover human problems. Once in a while, I also write opinion pieces on social problems that are not always welcomed. Sometimes, I have to just bombard the censorship. Sometimes, I tell myself that they're not going to get published. (RD10)

Revolutionary leader, Che Guevara warned that the Cuban Revolution should not create ‘*docile servants of the official thought*’ or ‘*scholarship students*’ who live at the expense of the state – practicing freedom in quotation marks’ (Guevara and Castro, 1989: 13). Instead, he envisioned a time in which the genuine voice of ‘the people’ could be heard. In his own words, ‘[r]evolutionaries will come who will sing the song of the new man in the true voice of the people’ (Guevara and Castro, 1989: 13). From the interviews, it seems journalists and bloggers might see themselves as these new revolutionaries, the redeemers that return ‘the Revolution’ back to the masses.

6.2.2 - Can ‘the Enemy’ be ‘Normalised’?

This section will discuss the influence of Cuba-US antagonism in the structure, conceptualisation, and deprofessionalisation of Cuban journalism. In order to do so, it will analyse the way in which practitioners and academics see the impact this confrontation has had throughout ‘the Revolution’. Since the interviews were conducted between 2014 and 2015, they offer a particularly interesting opportunity to study the role that the media played right before and soon after the normalisation period started. The institutional Cuban media has articulated a populist discursive strategy with the goal of stabilising the hegemony of the revolutionary project, as discussed in chapter four. However, from a discourse theoretical approach, the construction of unity requires the establishment of frontiers of belonging. This is coherent with *Granma*’s discourse, which called for a populist unification of collective will against an external threat.

The instrumental conceptualisation of the media, and of journalism, is often justified through the writings of José Martí, a 19th century journalist and liberation leader. Martí called ‘the people’, and journalists among them, to become soldiers during the war of liberation against Spain. This martial discourse of journalists united in a fight against ‘the enemy’ resonated with the military training of the revolutionary leaders, who came to power as *guerrilla* fighters. This view is coherent with *Granma*’s articulation of history as unity that was discussed in chapter four. However, the articulation of journalists as soldiers is challenged in the interviews. The way in

which the official discourse and the institutional media repeat José Martí's claims in 21st-century Cuba is seen by some journalists as a decontextualisation of national history. A young journalist working for the official media denounces the manipulation of national heroes in the hegemonic discourse:

There are some quotes of Martí's that have been manipulated. An original quote says: *'Journalists have so much soldier in them!'* [*'Tiene tanto el periodista de soldado'*]. For some, this means that journalism is all about following orders that journalists must serve. Others say that, when the enemy is nearby, it should only hear our voice of attack, rather than the internal divisions in the ranks, our disputes or our debates. But that's not true, our voice of attack is not all the enemy should hear. In the 19th century, Martí was organising a revolution; Martí was preparing a whole country to stand up for its ancestors. Martí was in a peculiar situation, preparing a war and a united party. Many Martí quotes have been manipulated (RB22).⁷²

The use of José Martí's quotes as a way of legitimising the hegemonic discourse of 'the Party' is also criticised by a young journalist who works at a non-institutional newspaper. The journalist considers that the distortion of history goes beyond the words of José Martí, and argues that even Fidel Castro's speeches are often decontextualised in the media, and interpreted in a way that supports the interests of 'the Party':

The concept that a journalist is a soldier, distorting Martí's words, was originated in a very different context than when it's said now. But well, let's accept that the journalist is a soldier and he must obey, and that the instrumentalisation of the media is necessary for defending the Revolution. Who decides what it means to defend the Revolution, and to damage it? Who judges this? It's like Fidel says: 'Inside the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, no rights'. This sentence is a bit complicated. Again, who decides what is inside the Revolution, and who decides what is outside? Whether it's this question, or many other of the same style, who decides what's inside and what's outside? The government; the government is who decides. (RA1)

⁷² José Martí (1991: 195) sent a letter to the editor-in-chief of the Argentinian newspaper *La Nación* on 10 June 1887 in which he claimed that Cuban journalists like himself were not afraid of dying in battle because they have the soul of a soldier.

It is in this context that military hierarchy, and values of obedience, of command and control, were extended to the management of the media system. The revolutionary media model has been designed for a country at war, as discussed in chapter one. This institutional design is not necessarily shared by the interviewees, however. For instance, a well-known academic expressed his frustration with the official conceptualisation of the Cuban media:

Most of what gets published in Cuba, whether we like it or not, and even if it is hard for us to admit, is based on a state of emergency, a society under siege sentiment; even if we do not like it, even if we think it should be different. (RC3)

The analysis of the interviews suggests that the perception of Cuba as a besieged society is still well-alive in the mind-set of Cuban journalists and media experts. Cuba is seen by the interviewees as a society under siege, as having a real external threat, characterised by the United States' efforts to overthrow the revolutionary government and establish a liberal democratic model in its place. The interviewees articulate a hubristic enemy that has imposed an economic and financial embargo on Cuba, funded CIA attacks (such as Playa Girón –also known as Bay of Pigs–), which violates human rights in the Global South, and that has unfairly imprisoned the 'Five Cuban Heroes'.⁷³ Support among journalists and academics for official campaigns against enemy aggressions, such as commemoration days or public demonstrations, seems essential to reasserting their revolutionary belonging. In this context, it is hard to distinguish free will from official pressures, and real commitment from double standards. Furthermore, the data reveals that all these possibilities can overlap, meaning journalists might genuinely believe in the fair liberation of the 'Cuban Five', while attending public rallies as a way of demonstrating their allegiance to 'the Revolution'. The complexity that guides the interviewees' public demonstrations of US repudiation can be seen in these two quotes from a journalist who mostly works for the institutional media (RA11), and a blogger (RB15):

One learns to deal with that [belonging] by defending fair causes, like the call to free the 'Cuban Five' in the United States. Unfortunately, sometimes one must use this as a shield, in order to demonstrate certain things. I agree that the 'Cuban Five' should be freed, that the blockade should be lifted, along with other things that are

⁷³ The 'Cuban Five' are five Cuban intelligence officers that were convicted in 1998 of conspiracy to commit espionage and murder in the US. However, Cuban authorities claim that they were on a counter-terrorist mission, infiltrating radical groups of Cuban exiles that were thought to be plotting attacks on the Island. The last three agents were freed as part of the reopening of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States on 17 December 2014. For more details on the 'Cuban Five', see chapter four.

obvious to me and aren't up for debate. They might be up for debate, but for people that seek another system for Cuba. (RA11)

I feel identified with the Revolution, and if there's a rally for the 'Cuban Five', I go. Because I believe they should come back, I believe that they're fighting for a just cause. And if there's a CRD [Committee for the Defence of the Revolution] meeting, I go there, as well. What you can't do is tell me what I can't publish. If you want to get along, then keep me close. Otherwise, we're going to fight. I'm lucky to have so many readers. (RB15)

The second quote adds a valuable nuance that is present in most interviews: the influence of US-Cuban antagonism on the restriction of freedom of speech in Cuba. Certain topics have been labelled as 'national security' matters, and are therefore made inaccessible. However, the data reveals that censorship has also impacted topics that are not connected to national security *a priori*, such as health and the educational system. One leading academic considers that the US threat has created '*constrictions, limits, prejudices, stereotypes*' and '*secrecy*' in the institutional media (RC3).

While all interviewees recognise that the spectre of an external threat has enhanced political control over the news media, only some react fervently. For instance, a leading media scholar suggests that leaders' restrictions on media content might have been useful in the early days of 'the Revolution', when there was a low degree of institutionalisation, and a high risk for US invasion. However, the scholar considers that '*the reproduction of those ways of doing this, when everything has changed, including the US threat, is truly crazy and counter-productive*' (RD18).

The data suggests wide consensus on the exaggeration of the external threat in the media. Foregrounding the threat of the external enemy responds to ideological reasons, and has been used for political purposes, such as the legitimisation of secrecy and censorship. According to the interviewees, the emphasis of the external enemy has served two goals: first, it has closed ranks in 'the Party', silencing any dissent; and second, it has externalised the source of national problems. For instance, a foreign affairs editor believes that censorship has been occasionally enforced due to the external threat. However, '*another theory can be that they don't want to talk about an issue, that the silencing of a topic has other goals. Because that's what I could think*', he asserts (RA1).

References to secrecy appear more often in the discourse of young journalists, working for both the state-owned and the non-institutional media. For instance, an independent blogger sees

secrecy as a manipulative strategy: *‘in my opinion, hiding information from the people is manipulative’* (RB15), while an academic who collaborates with non-institutional organisations defines it as opportunistic (RB13). Similarly, the foreign affairs editor for a national newspaper argues that secrecy has been used as a way of hiding leaders’ political mistakes, and the administrative mismanagement of resources (RA1).

On 17 December 2014, the United States and Cuba re-established diplomatic relations after severing ties in 1961. This milestone has been labelled the ‘process of normalisation’, referring to both nations resuming economic, political, and cultural collaboration in areas of mutual interest (Bolaños Suárez, 2015; Obama, 2016). Despite the so-called ‘Cuban thaw’ (*‘el deshielo cubano’*), the interviewees consider that the paradigm of ‘society under siege’ remains as a powerful signifier. A senior academic and journalist believes that the new relationship with the United States has not produced significant changes in the content of the news media. While the so-called ‘normalisation’ of relations is still fragile and unfolding, the sentiment of siege has been naturalised in newsrooms for decades (RA17; RC9; RC19). Furthermore, there is a general understanding that the subversive goals of the United States, and even the blockade, remain unchanged (RC9).

The interviewees describe an environment in which media editors, and journalists, have become accustomed to following political guidelines. However, the context of change that has come with the ‘Updating of the Economic Model’ and the ‘normalisation’ of relations with the United States has sparked divergent currents of opinion amongst the political elites, who have yet to reach a consensus (Hoffmann, 2011b). With political discourse at odds, journalists lack guidance, and therefore continue to work within their comfort zone, playing it safe. This is the opinion of a journalist that used to work for a state-owned newspaper:

When you restrict personal initiative, that’s what happens. That’s what has happened in the state-owned media: a permanent state of waiting, of standby. –I’m going to wait to see how things develop because I don’t even dare to question the thoughts of my boss. I’m going to stop being so creative, because otherwise I’m going to look for trouble. (RA17)

A few months into the process of ‘normalisation’, Cuba was invited to participate for the first time in the 2015 Summit of the Americas, which took place in Panama.⁷⁴ After several public acts

⁷⁴ The Summit of the Americas was created in 1994 as a space for regional debate and collaboration. However, the Summit is organised by several multilateral bodies, which are coordinated by the Organisation of American States (OAS). Cuba was excluded from the OAS in 1962, soon after Fidel Castro declared himself a Marxist-Leninist on 2

of repudiation, the representatives of the revolutionary civil society abandoned the room in which they were expected to dialogue with the rest of the accredited members of the opposition.⁷⁵ A few physical confrontations between both sides were even caught on camera. In the interviews, a young journalist explains how distraught she felt during the summit (RA21). This was the first time that the country participated in the regional event, and she felt very embarrassed of the image that Cuba, and Cubans, were giving to the outside world. However, even worse for her was the polarisation of those accredited as civil society representatives, who stifled any chances for middle-ground positions:

Do you know who paid for it and who had it worst? The people that were in the middle, those who didn't back the opposition, nor the state. Those who really wanted to discuss, and to vote, as representatives of civil society. Maybe the scandal was prepared [in Miami] and we fell into their trap, but it was convenient for the state apparatus to fall in the trap, because they weren't ready to dialogue. Maybe they thought there would be arguments they wouldn't be able to refute. Or maybe they preferred to prepare the scandal rather than having a public discussion. (RA21)

6.3 - Sources of Resistance to Change

The following lines will analyse the interviewees' perceived contradiction between Party calls for a more professional journalism, practitioners' normative ideals, and the constraints that hinder the materialisation of both official discourses and journalists' will. Whereas all interviewees agree on the need for changing the media model, they are nevertheless split over the factors that have hindered the materialisation of Party calls for openness. Most accounts recognise a progressive deprofessionalisation of journalism, which entails a loss of autonomy. Consequently, Party leaders tend to see journalists' demands as lacking authority, and rarely implement the mechanisms necessary to fulfil these demands.

December of the same year. The sanctions that have banned Cuba from participating in the Summit were lifted in 2009. However, the Island did not participate until 2015, accepting the invitation of Panama's vice minister of foreign affairs, Luis Miguel Hincapié. The participation of Cuba took place only a few months after the thaw in diplomatic relations with the United States, on 17 December 2014.

⁷⁵ In his speech on the 'normalisation' of US-Cuba relations, former US President, Barack Obama (2014) announced his will to facilitate the attendance of members of the (non-institutional) Cuban civil society at the Panama Summit.

6.3.1 - The Focus on Journalists' Self-Rectification

In previous sections, there is a recurrent idea that continues to emerge: Cuban journalists' need to comply with Party guidelines in order to protect their professional and economic status. The need to play it safe could be at the roots of journalists' *acomodamiento*, of their conformity and compliance with the rules of the game. The interviews indicate a vicious circle of external control, disengagement, conformity, and deprofessionalisation. The more deprofessionalised journalism becomes, the more prone practitioners are to accepting Party oversight.

Whereas the deprofessionalisation of Cuban journalism seems apparent, there are different ways of explaining its roots. In the interviews, some journalists tend to place the blame on the shoulders of their peers, who have become overly comfortable with state supervision, and too embedded in a Soviet-style bureaucratisation of media practices. For example, the chief sub-editor of a national daily considers that one of the main obstacles to change are journalists themselves, and their inclination to choose personal comfort over risky practices (RB12). The narrative of a 'dependency path', that is, of younger generations' naturalisation of conservative ideas and practices, can be identified in the following account:

When I was in charge of the local networks of correspondents, I always asked them to bring me polemical stories that uncovered government wrong doings or deficiencies. I showed these to government officials, so they also became aware of the problems, and were able to address them. I remember that I had two correspondents who were very daring and brought me excellent stories. They had a will to change things. However, I had another ten, the great majority, who kept doing exactly the same for years, playing it safe. I think they had perhaps been told off in the past. Because no one is fired here if they make a mistake, they are just called to order (...). In any case, there is an intellectual compliance [in the newsrooms], and many journalists have just got too accustomed to following press releases. (RB12)

The excerpt above offers an interesting insight to the environment in which editors and journalists work. In fact, there is an important generational gap in Cuban newsrooms where recently graduated reporters move on to other sectors after completing the mandatory social work programme. As a young editor puts it, 'newsrooms get a lot of young people with an excellent academic background, but who need a lot of practical training. By the time we've managed to train them, they leave' (RB25).

The generational gap is so pronounced in newsrooms that there are many journalists in their late twenties or early thirties in editorial positions, as those with real experience have moved on to other jobs –either within Cuba, or abroad. Some senior journalists are even asked to go back to work after retirement to fill the gap (RD6). As a result, journalists from very different generations, with dissimilar concerns and goals, find themselves sharing the office. At one extreme, there are some senior journalists who seem comfortable with an undemanding role. At the other extreme, there are young journalists who are willing to face risks, yet lack the professional experience and the confidence to achieve their goals. According to editors, young journalists lack ‘*the assertiveness*’ (‘*la garra*’) that allows senior journalists to obtain certain information, even when all other sources close the door on them (RC3). This is particularly relevant when a great deal of bureaucrats assume that they have the right to censor information at their will, and to bully the inquisitive journalists (RD10; RB12; RB22; RB25; RA17). The problem is that journalists’ rights are not guaranteed by law, or widely respected in practice. A digital journalist contends that government officials are used to treating journalists as tools to advance their message, and that levels of despotism vary depending on the officials’ individual personality (RA17).

According to the interviewees, younger generations are more likely to defend bold and daring ideas, whereas older generations tend to retain a stronger Soviet influence, and a dogmatic way of thinking (RC19). For instance, a recent-graduate journalist and blogger considers he is ‘*too young*’ to see any virtues in the Cuban institutional media (RA11). The ideological gap between young and senior revolutionaries is quite evident in the account of a young trained journalist who decided to become an independent blogger:

I will talk about myself. I was formed and educated by the Revolution. I was a militant in the Communist Youth League until I was 28. However, I won't be a member of the Communist Party because I don't believe in the way in which the Party is doing certain things. It's not that I don't believe in the Party itself, it's just that I don't believe in certain practices. My party, my struggle, is called [name of his blog]. I think I contribute more to my community by publishing critical articles and making analysis about the situation there, than by meeting once a month in an air-conditioned office with forty Party members of the old guard. Especially, when they see things in a different light than I do. (RB15)

Interestingly, despite the apparent correlation between age and ideas, it has proved hard to classify the interviewees’ points of view along generational lines. Even while older generations

seem to hold more patriotic ideas, the interviewees' ideological positions are not confined by any means to age or gender, or to their main professional identity. This finding is consistent with previous literature, which highlights Cuban journalists' longstanding discontent with the alleged unity between 'the Party' and the media.

Just like the spectre of an external threat, attacks against journalists' lack of professionalism can be used as a way of disguising censorship. The interviews suggest that the 'Central Committee of the Party' forces the publication of media press releases through its ideological department (*'Departamento Ideológico del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba'*), even while journalists are called on to cover official events, and have written their own news story (RA21). The questioning of journalists' abilities is also used by public servants, who often request a copy of their interview before publication. A young journalist, who used to work for an institutional daily, narrates her experience in the following excerpt:

When you tell them that you are affiliated, and Cuban, there is usually no problem, they give you an interview. Then, they tell you: –Let me see the draft so I can read what I said, and how you're going to phrase it. It's just to make sure that you didn't get it wrong, and don't make any mistakes. (RA21)

Cuban journalists' problematic relationship with sources is accentuated by the lack of a media law that establishes their rights. For example, the unwritten rule has been that journalists need to disclose their sources to the official media. This can be problematic because, when journalists want to report on a case of corruption, they need the source to agree to being exposed, and this rarely happens (RB25). Journalists working for the non-institutional media have more freedom to use undisclosed sources, while they recognise that this is not ethically ideal (RA21). This situation is even harder for bloggers, who have commonly been associated with dissidence (RA14; RB13), and for journalists working in the non-institutional media. The code of ethics of the Union of Cuban Journalists (UPEC, 2013a) forbids affiliated journalists to use their address book when they work for other media outlets, since it condemns the use of their professional relations for profit.⁷⁶ While these rules were not enforced at the time of the interviews, those working outside of the institutional setting reported experiencing difficulties accessing official sources. However, some saw a silver lining, and claimed that this implicit restriction

⁷⁶ Article 19 of the Code of Ethics states that journalists '*cannot use professional relations for profit, or for obtaining sinecure for their own benefit, or that of others*' (UPEC, 2013a: 30).

obliges non-institutional projects to seek a wide range of voices, such as experts, lower-ranking officials, and citizens.

6.3.2 - From Individual Struggle to Collective Action

Overall, most interviewees refute the idea that journalists' age, compliance, or lack of professionalism are to blame for the problems in the Cuban media. Instead, some consider that journalists themselves are the main virtue of the media system. When I asked the interviewees about the main virtues of the Cuban media, journalists' professionalism often came up first (RB13; RB15). One editor was very explicit regarding this: '*It is not like all foolish Cuban teenagers suddenly agreed on studying journalism*', she says (RC4). For her, it is quite the opposite: students need excellent grades to get into Journalism Studies, and leave the Faculty highly qualified.

In the interviews, Cuban practitioners and academics see themselves as agents of a grassroots change that puts professional values first. For instance, the young sub-editor of a daily newspaper believes that change is coming because people in positions of power, like herself, have a different vision of what journalism should be, both in theory and in practice (RB12). While the interviews reveal the importance of professional-led change, this section has also highlighted the hardships that journalists have to face, such as the pressure of populist discursive articulations, or difficulties accessing the sources.

During the interviews, several journalists emphasised the difficulty of pushing the boundaries of the system from 'within'.⁷⁷ For instance, two editors-in-chief stressed that it takes them a lot of work to resist external attempts to impose the official agenda (RC4; RC24). The editor-in-chief of an institutional online newspaper uses a colloquial expression to describe the consequences of pursuing professional, rather than ideological, values: '*I receive smacks on the head [cocotazos, or the effect of having a coconut thrown to one's head] every day*' (RC4). In fact, a senior editor believes that sometimes it is necessary to accept a certain level of censorship, as long as it does not change the overall message of the story, in order to get a thorny article out there (RD11).

⁷⁷ Despite avoiding direct Party mediation, bloggers also admitted to being under pressure when writing about sensitive topics (RB15). Whereas some of them preferred not to comment on this issue, a blogger that has leaked some corruption cases in the past explained that the authorities were not happy with it. '*It was a blow. They tugged my ears again and again*', he revealed (RB15). This did not stop him, though, from leaking secret government provisions on internet access a year later, obliging political leaders to address the issue in the institutional media (*OnCuba*, 2015). In a personal interview, another blogger defended this initiative by arguing that the Revolution is not what a public servant decides, but belongs to everyone (RB15). Therefore, he argued, journalists have the responsibility of looking after the public interest.

Rather than putting all the blame on journalists, some bloggers explain that ‘convenience’ (*acomodamiento*) and ‘contentment’ are natural strategies for self-preservation. These are essential for guaranteeing job security –especially if they need to support their family. Therefore, the interviewees seem wary of taking individual steps, as this could put their professional and economic stability at risk (RA17; RA21; RA14; RD10; RD18). Pushing the boundaries of what can be said seems to still require measure, and boldness (RB13). *‘If there is an imaginary line [of belonging], who dares to cross it? Those who have dared, have paid for it, and have regretted it’*, a blogger and academic states (RB13). Instead, the interviews suggest that journalists understand media change as a collective task in the realm of ‘possible’ and ‘consensual’ reforms within ‘the Revolution’, rather than more radical (and perhaps, ideal) ones.⁷⁸

6.4 - Sources of Change in Cuban Journalism

6.4.1 - Digital Technologies

Digital culture, like the mass media, has been conceived in Cuba as serving national and collective goals. Therefore, the state has often co-opted new platforms of communication, reproducing the populist discourse of the traditional media, and asking engaged journalists to use the Internet to defend ‘the Revolution’ against attacks in the international media. In order to do this, ‘the Party’ has offered journalists the possibility of accessing affordable –albeit very slow– internet at home with the condition that they open blogs that defend ‘the Revolution’. In the words of an independent media editor, Internet access reached Cuban professionals with a revolutionary responsibility (RA20).

The interviews suggest that the state-led campaign to use the Internet in its favour was soon challenged by the emergence of non-institutional blogs. In the early 2000s, blogs were still *‘a fight in the leadership’* (RA1) since the majority of Cubans had limited or no access to the Internet. However, the improvements to internet connexion on the Island has allowed citizens to develop communication strategies that circumvent bureaucratic control. Cubans have been using the Internet and digital technologies in unanticipated ways, creating non-institutionalised spaces for debate, and reflecting the plurality of actors, interests and expectations that characterise

⁷⁸ References to revolutionary ‘belonging’ and ‘consensus’ are interpreted in the light of Fidel Castro’s words to the Intellectuals: *‘within the Revolution, everything goes; against the Revolution, nothing’*. This sentence, as explained in chapter one, became the unofficial threshold of intellectual debate.

contemporary Cuban society (RA20). This has been facilitated through online and offline digital platforms of access, such as USB sticks, SMS and email chains, CDs and DVDs, illegal TV antennas, and the ‘weekly information package’ (*‘el paquete semanal’*) that are periodically updated and include both news and entertainment.⁷⁹ These channels have created opportunities for interpersonal communication, amusement, and sharing of blog posts or magazines on PDF. While most non-institutional publications are tolerated inasmuch as they avoid political comments, some interviewees consider that everything has political implications. For them, having a personal initiative, and starting an independent media project without waiting for a licence, is an act of resistance in itself (RA17; RA20).

The interviews indicate widespread consensus on the benefits of non-institutional publications and blogs. These outlets are seen to be broadening the range of issues that can be discussed in public, and they gauge when and how they can be published. The publication of polemical stories on blogs and digital media projects has obliged the institutional media to acknowledge problems, and to provide answers to the public. In this sense, the interviewees agree that the state has lost its communicational hegemony: everything gets published. According to a Cuban blogger, it is difficult for ‘the Party’ to use the ‘external threat’ to stop bloggers like him from posting critical commentary (RA20). For ‘the Party’, accusing revolutionary bloggers of endangering national interest can be counter-productive, since bloggers are supportive of one another and are able to quickly disseminate their disapproval of Party decisions that may affect their rights. *‘You can close all media outlets, but how are you going to deal with individual citizens?’* –she comments (RA20). In a process that considers itself democratic, she wonders why the state would be still be wary of empowering citizens:

What are you [the state] scared of, if you have been preparing the people for 50 years to be well-informed, well-educated? How are you going to now deny them a tool that contributes towards these goals? (RA20)

An academic working at the Faculty of Communication could have the answer to these questions. In his opinion, it is not possible to educate citizens, and then, not expect them to make their voice heard (RC3).

⁷⁹ *‘El paquete’*, as it is commonly known, is a one-terabyte compilation of the latest foreign shows and films, international magazines and newspapers, as well as digital Cuban publications, software, and games that is distributed door to door through USB devices and external hard-drives. It generally does not contain politically sensitive material (CPIJ, 2016).

Journalists who run blogs, or work for non-institutional projects, often receive attacks for their lack of responsibility. However, they consider that their professional responsibility should not be called into question as long as the official media continues to hide public information. For instance, the Union of Cuban Journalists has accused a non-institutional digital newspaper of violating the code of ethics. A journalist working for this paper sees the union's attitude as 'hypocritical' and 'dishonest', given how often ethical principles are ignored by the official media (RA17). Both sides' use of ethics to discredit each other is indicative of the tension that has emerged between revolutionary institutions, and those choosing a non-institutional path. Two journalists that finished their social work at institutional newspapers and stayed on for full-time positions (RA17; RA21) recall feeling overly curtailed, and decided to collaborate with a non-institutional site. When their bosses found out, they were forced to leave the official press, which they were happy to do. One of them, who now works for a non-institutional digital newspaper, explains that she left because she could no longer tolerate the pressure:

Everything is so closed, so closed! It's a space in which you only have two options. You either do it their way, or you have no choice but to give up being a journalist for the rest of your life, and start selling fries on the street. At one point, I felt suffocated, because I had to do it their way, and allow the wheels of the system to crush me.
(RA21)

Some digital magazines and newspapers are able to compensate their journalists well above the wage paid by the state.⁸⁰ According to the interviewees, they can easily make twenty dollars for a well-researched reportage (which is what they would be paid monthly in an official newspaper – and even less during the social work period). While not all digital newspapers can offer economic incentives, journalists attest that they are allowed to be creative, and to grow professionally (RA17; RA5). Among the interviewees, 7 out of 25 had recently combined a job in the public sector (whether as academics or as journalists) with non-institutional digital projects. Despite the economic and professional incentives of these positions, however, some reported colleagues using pseudonyms in order to avoid being downgraded in their public jobs.

⁸⁰ Some non-institutional online projects are registered in third-party countries and hold a foreign press accreditation, even if their main or sole office is in Cuba. This is the case of the digital newspaper *OnCuba* (registered in the US) and the cultural magazine *Vistar* (registered in the Dominican Republic). They are for-profit publications, and receive income from advertising.

6.4.2 - The ‘Updating’ of the Cuban System

In previous sections, I have explained that journalists who covered the call to the IV Congress of ‘the Party’ (1991) were rooted in a ‘rectification’ spirit, that is, they were inspired by official calls to improve ‘the Revolution’ through open debate and criticism. Similarly, journalists who covered the debates that preceded the VI Congress (2011) were motivated by Raúl Castro’s calls for journalists to openly report on social problems (Leyva and Somohano, 2008). In fact, some practitioners saw Raúl’s calls to debate as an opportunity to recover the critical spirit of the ‘Rectification’ period.

The analysis of the interviews reveals that the initial media coverage of the 2010-2011 debates was not coherent with official calls to foster public debate, however. During the first phases of change, all news stories on this topic had to pass an external control before publication. This control was executed by the ‘Commission of Implementation and Development of the Guidelines’ associated with the Ministry of Economic Planning and led by the minister himself, Marino Murillo. A newspaper editor remembers that the commission decided what was to be published, and what was not:

They went as far as controlling certain words, because that was part of the unfolding of the process, until they realised that it was not an appropriate mechanism. Who could be more entitled to decide what appears and what not than the editor in chief? Because this person is a politically compromised lover of this country, and this Revolution. (RB12)

Another editor recalls that the control commission was overly ‘inquisitorial’ (RC16). The editor considers that ‘the Party’ meant well, given that its real intention was to make sure that journalists were familiar with the new measures before writing about them (RC16). In any case, both editors agree on the fact that the commission did not last because the media opposed it. A chief sub-editor acknowledges that even afterward, whenever there are new policies that are not completely clear, the Council of State’s press takes care of the publications that appear in the press. For her colleague (RA1), these controls mean that the press is not authorised to talk about certain problems. For instance, journalists are not allowed to criticise, or even discuss new laws. However, they both agree that there is more freedom when covering the processes of implementation (RB25; RA1), and that editors can send journalists to verify whether new regulations are working as expected.

A leading scholar (RC3) at the Faculty of Communication has been coordinating undergraduate theses that examine the official coverage of the ‘Updating’ process, and the results are discouraging (as discussed in chapter one). However, he does not seem surprised by the levels of control in the coverage of recent changes, since there exist patterns of compliance, and self-censorship, which are difficult to change when addressing sensitive topics. Journalist’s adaptation to newsroom routines is coherent with previous literature, which explores the pressures of organisational and structural constraints (Mellado and Van Dalen, 2014). As a senior scholar highlights, *‘the inertia remains in the mentality, in the behaviour, in the attitude of political and media actors, in social relationships that don’t change by decree, or by replacing those in charge’* (RD6).

6.4.3 - The Leverage of Cuban Academia

Journalists’ views regarding the pace and direction of the ‘updates’ are complex and heterogeneous, and this section has shown that there are important discrepancies (RD18). Nevertheless, there is overwhelming consensus on the need to renew an outdated media model. The previous subsection, though, reinforces the idea that media reform has never been an urgent matter for the revolutionary leadership, despite official calls for change.⁸¹ For example, a prominent academic and practitioner considers that journalistic practice in Cuba lies behind not only normative theory, but also official discourse (RD23). This is coherent with previous research discussed in chapter one, which highlights that Cuban journalists have not enjoyed the national and international visibility and prestige than artists and intellectuals have, nor the same agency. An independent journalist considers that Party calls to restructure the Cuban media model have been cyclical (RC3). However, every time there has been determination for change, this has been interrupted by an adverse crisis that has either slowed down or simply broken up the process. A senior journalist justifies this delay, however, by considering the delicate political, economic and social circumstances that ‘the Revolution’ has been exposed to. *‘What are thirty years? The unfolding of ideas’*, he concludes RD2.

The contradiction between official discourses of media change and the lack of effective mechanisms for this change to take place is one of many inconsistencies. According to the interviewees, this is tightly linked to the contradiction between journalists’ normative ideals, and their ability to develop those ideals in practice. The data suggests that journalists become aware of the dissonance between theory and practice during their internships in the institutional media.

⁸¹ Chapter one discusses Party and leaders’ calls for a critical and professional media dating back to the mid-1970s.

A young journalist and academic explains that students learn the normative ‘ideals’ of journalism at the Faculty (RA7). However, she observes, they develop their professional routines in the context of the newsrooms, which are guided by a set of very different values:

When we teach here [at the Faculty of Communication], we tell students that they need to play certain roles in the media. But then, when they get to the media, they start reproducing old journalistic routines, vices that affect the profession. Those vices are an excessive closeness to institutional sources, a certain flatness [achatamiento], a certain compliance with being oriented, with being managed by the Party, a lot of self-censorship. (RA7)

The absence of a comprehensive body of academic work on Cuban media has historically hindered the ability of journalists to express their demands beyond the restricted spaces granted by ‘the Party’. While the identification of the problems in Cuban journalism has been clear for years, a well-documented, scientific gathering of these problems has simply not taken place. A senior scholar (RD13) left his job as editor-in-chief of the national daily *Juventud Rebelde* and became dean of the Faculty of Communication during the period of ‘Rectification’. By the time he arrived at the Faculty, there was already a group of colleagues in place who knew how to reorganise the Cuban media system, so he assumed leverage of the process. While the hardship of the ‘Special Period’ obstructed the changes in the media model, academic demands caught on, inaugurating a new period of academic leverage.

Most interviewees state that the first journalist who had the experience, the knowledge and the will to conduct comprehensive research regarding the problems of Cuban journalism was former dean of the Faculty of Communication, Julio García Luis. A young scholar remembers that, before his doctoral thesis, journalists’ problems were discussed in small spaces, and only at the ‘right moment’ (RA8). However, he argues that the work of García Luis took journalists’ demands beyond academia and journalistic congresses, having a wide political impact. For instance, a leading academic considers that Julio’s 2004 doctoral thesis was so revolutionarily subversive that it was unpublishable until 2013: ‘*This society was not ready to listen to so many truths at once, so cautious and well argued*’ (RC3). However, there seems to be political resistance to take academic research on communication policies into account (RA11; RC4; RD18). The importance of political will for ‘Updating’ the Cuban media model will be discussed in the following lines.

6.4.4 - The Focus on Political Will

Leaders' fear of losing hegemonic control of the news media seems to be stronger than their will to change, stresses a young blogger (RA14). This could explain why journalistic and academic initiatives for change tend to be more conservative than risky (RA14; RB22; RC16). The interviewees working on blogs and for the non-institutional media consider that journalists are discouraged from taking any risks. Not only are they not rewarded economically or professionally, but they risk getting into trouble for reporting on social issues, or on government mismanagement (RA14). This opinion is also shared by a well-known blogger:

There are a lot of vices in the press, too much conformism. Many who just think, 'I am just going to write this rather than that, because otherwise it won't get published'. When one graduates from the journalism school, one starts being very daring, very challenging. Then the editor tells you off and sends you to re-write the story. After the fourth time, he sends you to re-write it, you just stop giving a damn! Then, you just start writing the same shit everyone else writes. You just think to yourself, 'I am just going to concentrate on my own projects, on using the Internet, and on getting invited to official events, where there are free food and drinks'. (RC4)

In chapter one I have discussed that the documents defining citizens' right to information, and that call on the media to be more critical, date back to the mid-1970s. The slow pace of change in the media has not only produced a double contradiction between journalists' ideals and media practice, but between official articulations of media roles and the rigidity of media structures, as well. A leading scholar and former editor-in-chief claims that part of the political elite still subscribe to the Soviet model of Party media control (RD23). Despite being a minority view, it is predominant among older Party leaders, who tend to occupy decisive political positions. A younger editor agrees, and is convinced that the conceptualisation of the media as an instrument of 'the Party' lies at the heart of the contradiction between official claims and real change:

You can find public servants at the highest level, even the president of the Republic, who tell you that it is true, that Cuban journalism needs to change. They tell you that but, at the same time, they don't create the necessary mechanisms that would allow this change to take place. This is because their mentality hasn't changed. They keep seeing the media as an instrument of propaganda, of dissemination, rather than one that polemises, debates, and generates social consensus. (RA1)

Journalists and academics' opinions appear split regarding whether decision-makers' will to reform the media is genuine. A senior journalist and academic claims that some political leaders, such as Miguel Díaz-Canel, First Vice-President of the Council of State, are now showing a clear political determination, and pushing change forward (RD23). However, there seems to be a lack of political agreement on the extent to which reform will override fear. In the words of a Cuban academic,

We'll see how much we manage to advance; how many old, dogmatic obstacles remain; how long the fear of transformations lasts in the current situation of harassment that is dominating the country. (RD23)

The battle between political will and fear of reforms is one of the main factors that, according to the interviewees, delays the materialisation of journalists' demands. For instance, one of the interviewees considers that, even if there is a clear political will to change, the fear of losing 'the Party' hegemony over flows of communication is even greater. *'There is the fear that the explosive expression of opinions will produce explosive reactions in the country'*, he states (RA14).

In contrast, a young editor insists that the main political obstacle is the lack of a unanimous political will, as journalists lack the means to change the media system by themselves (RA1).

How are you going to ask the press to be coherent when they allow the sale of cars for 240 thousand dollars? How am I coherent with that? Be coherent allow me to write an article on why cars have to sell for that price. That's typical of the political argot, they use those soft words, but it's mostly demagoguery. All Cuban politicians do that a lot, but it's demagogic to blindly blame ourselves [the journalists] and to say, 'Oh, we have to be more coherent and improve the press'. It's a lie. If politicians aren't coherent, and don't offer any explanations, how do you want me to explain it to you? I'm not a magician. (RA1)

Similarly, a leading scholar at the Faculty of Communication believes that journalists, and even editors, have, in fact, little agency to advance their demands (RC3). During the interview, he recalls an encounter between the editor-in-chief of *Granma*, Pelayo Terry, and students at the *University of Havana* in 2014, during the public defence of a BA thesis:

Students told the editor-in-chief of Granma a few truths. He suddenly got up from his chair, and agreed. Then, he asked the students to analyse the elements that are hindering the professionalisation of journalism altogether. 'I have to deal with such

a level of deprofessionalisation, of external regulation, of external agents that go beyond journalism itself; it takes me so much work to maintain my own agenda’.
(RC3)

It is worth noting that, despite broad consensus for media change, there are visible divisions between more ‘conservative’ or ‘orthodox’ points of view, and more ‘radical’ or ‘revolutionary’ ones. Those who see themselves as ‘true revolutionaries’ claim that the real obstacles to change are the persistence of old mentalities, as well as bureaucratic organisational structures. For instance, a journalist and academic contends that current state-led changes are not solving the problem of Cuban journalism, since journalists have accumulated professional frustration for decades. The problems in the media, he argues, cannot be redressed under the existing political and economic structure of the media. He states that this task requires structural and radical changes in the Cuban media model. This view can be seen in the following excerpt from an editor:

There have been many calls for change; there has been an increasing awareness among practitioners, politicians and citizens about the need to change Cuban journalism, about the need for Cuban journalism to reengage with reality. But in practice, this hasn’t happened because the structural conditions in which journalists operate have not changed. It’s a structural problem, not just a matter of discursively claiming change. Yes, let’s change. But, what are the real conditions that will allow us to change? We can’t change within the current structure. (RB22)

Whereas some changes are visible in the media, such as greater citizen participation and the coverage of certain social issues, the interviews also reveal that there is a broader range of projects under way, such as readership surveys, changes in the layout of the newspapers, and even experiments with advertising (RB12; RB25).⁸² Furthermore, the government is currently negotiating a new law that would regulate information and flows of communication in Cuba, guaranteeing, at least in theory, further rights for journalists (UPEC, 2013b: 32).

While it is important to acknowledge the changes and initiatives taken under Raúl Castro’s government, most interviewees highlight that these projects are still at an early stage. There remains a lack of transparency regarding both the debates and the experiments under way, and, therefore, changes are far from having a real impact on everyday journalistic practice. For

⁸² For instance, private Cuban businesses, such as restaurants [*paladares*] already pay for advertising in non-institutional digital publications that are disseminated through the ‘weekly package’.

instance, a senior subeditor considers current changes to be just ‘*palliative measures*’, and advocates for some degree of radicalism: ‘*If we [journalists] don’t commit ourselves to a radical change, able to solve the structural problems, we’ll take some steps forward, and then go back to usual*’ (RC16). His colleague goes one step further and affirms that the Cuban media model needs radical, structural changes: ‘*In my opinion, I think we need another Revolution. Maybe I’m too heretical for saying this, but I think we need another Revolution, able to change the current structures*’, he contends (RB22).

These quotes illustrate how those who identify themselves as ‘true revolutionaries’ see the political system, rather than journalists, as the main deterrent to media change. For instance, a young journalist and blogger claims that official discourses of openness do not necessarily imply clear political and legal support for more independent journalistic practices. ‘*They invite you to listen, but your capacity for taking action is tied up*’, he says (RA11). The difference between leaders’ calls to debate, and their respect for journalists’ opinions, as introduced at the beginning of this chapter, is a key element that hinders change on the Island. However, journalists are aware of the political and systemic roots of the problems that hinder a change of the institutional media model. Accordingly, they have put this issue on the table in negotiations with Raúl Castro’s government.

6.5 - Discussion: The Rearticulation of Collective Identity

The interviews with Cuban journalists and media scholars reveal the double contradiction that lies at the heart of the Cuban media system, which falls behind not just normative theory, but also official discourses of openness. This contradiction lies at the heart of a political discourse that calls to open debate, yet prioritises national unity over plurality, and censorship above dissent. The following lines will explore these contradictions in the light of recent research on Cuban media, and the role of journalism in the ‘Updating’ of the Cuban economic and social model.

6.5.1 - The Rearticulation of Nodal Points

Chapter one has explained that the relationship between artists and intellectuals, on the one hand, and the Cuban state, on the other, has been far from lineal. While a form of colonisation of society by the state has taken place since the early 1960s, this does not mean that subjects were

left merciless, and powerless, to follow the course traced by a repressive state. Discipline, rather than repression, has been the preferred strategy of the Cuban government (Quiroga, 2005; Kapcia, 2014). A discipline rooted in Cuban nationalism, which rewarded ‘revolutionary’ attitudes and the prevalence of the ‘common good’, while condemning difference, and individualism. In this context, values such as tolerance or respect for diversity have been framed as weaknesses, while intransigence became a virtue (Coyula, 2007: 3). The repression that took place during the ‘grey quinquennium’ reinforced fear of control, double standards and conformism in the intellectual community, as the following excerpt shows:

Some put on a conformist mask, left religious medallions at home, attended guards and voluntary work, or made some suspicious manners more virile, all that with the aim of not being expelled. Other ‘deviant’ but rescuable people received the blessing of being sent to work in agriculture, as if cutting their hair, wearing grey khaki pants, and developing blisters in the countryside could return them to the fold, so they could fulfil the parameters that were expected of a young university student. Those who were incorrigible, that kind of human expendable material that exists in all periods and which serves as a scapegoat, received the Final Solution, being deprived from studying at university. That is, the fear led to double standards [doble moral], which reached out to both Summoners, and the summoned. (Coyula, 2007: 12)

As the previous excerpt illustrates, some of the elements that slow down change in Cuba have to do with the paternalistic and authoritarian role of the state, as well as journalists’ focus on everyday survival, and their fear of being stigmatised as ‘problematic’, or ‘heretical’ (Toledo Sande, 2014; Espina, 2008). Guerra’s (2012) ethnographic analysis reveals that being labelled as ‘confused’ [‘confundido’] has historically been considered worse than simply being indifferent. Historically, intellectuals who demoralised ‘the people’ with their doubts were presented as cowards who destroyed the combative morale and thereby endangered the fulfilment of revolutionary goals (Guerra, 2012: 137).

The Cuban media system is still configured around a systematised suspicion of dissent, which is seen to be dangerous, or at the least politically incorrect. The experience of past failures to achieve national sovereignty led the revolutionary leadership to conclude that the dream of full independence required national unity. This unity was created around the figure of Fidel Castro and the historical quest for national sovereignty (Guerra, 2012). However, unity also implied that the advancement of collective empowerment legitimised the suppression of dissent in order to

achieve revolutionary goals. In other words, Cubans, including journalists, had to march in lockstep (*pegaditos*). This has implications for the dissenters, who can be subject to the downgrading of their professional status (Díaz Rodríguez and Sokooh Valle, 2013: 64). The condemnation of dissent has certainly influenced journalists' tendency to shift towards conformism, self-censorship, and to resist change. As the data indicates, some journalists consider moderation to be necessary for slowly broadening the scope of what can be publicly debated. For Cuban scholar, Mayra Espina (2008: 8), the two main political factors that limit Cuban debate are the confusion between political unity and unanimity of criteria, and the '*enemy syndrome*', which associates dissent with vulnerability in the face of external threats. However, despite the preponderance of this populist narrative in media discourse, the interviews suggest that Cuban journalists and media scholars openly challenge this narrative, offering non-hegemonic readings.

Some contextual elements facilitate the visibility of journalists' demands. First, Fidel Castro's authority has been an essential element in the articulation of a people-party unity up until his death on 25 November 2016. Raúl Castro's collegiate leadership has attempted to rearticulate long frustrated popular demands through a hegemonic intervention: the 'Updating of the Economic and Social Model of the Cuban Revolution'. However, the data indicates that the ability of the leadership to successfully articulate a unified meaning around 'the Revolution' seems less powerful than before.

Media populist articulations can be collectively called into question and disarticulated through non-institutional information and communication channels. In this sense, the efficacy of hegemonic interventions aimed at renewing popular consensus through the mass media seem weaker than ever. According to the data, the construction of national unity through the externalisation of dislocation is also losing ground. The inability of the leadership to provide economic well-being and pluralistic communicational spaces to citizens has forced a radical move in the historic relationship with the United States. The relationship with the historical enemy is being rearticulated in practice through institutional mechanisms, such as the reopening of diplomatic relations and negotiation in key economic sectors, while keeping a discursive populist construction of the US as an enemy. In this context, institutionalisation and democratisation have been uprooted from traditional equivalential chains, becoming floating signifiers that need to be integrated in order to maintain the hegemonic order. Yet, their integration brings about new challenges.

Chapter one has explained that the ideal values of journalism have been determined by revolutionary, rather than professional ideals. Therefore, what is 'good', and 'ethical', has been

externally imposed, rather than internally negotiated. The introduction to the Code of Ethics (UPEC, 2013b) states the historical moral bases that should guide journalists' practice. Quoting the preamble to the Constitution, the code starts with the following statement:

In assuming the deep Martíán aspiration that guides the Magna Carta of the country: "I want the fundamental law of our republic to be the tribute of Cubans to the full dignity of man"; heirs of a professional tradition in which converge the patriotic, revolutionary and socialist vocation, and the highest ethical responsibilities. (UPEC, 2013b)

A few lines later, the introduction states the values that should guide journalists' work:

The fulfilment of our social role requires acting with professional enthusiasm, consecration, responsibility and courage in order to ensure the right of the people to receive timely, accurate and complete information of all those facts that constitute the news, or topics of interest. (UPEC, 2013a)

The revolutionary values that permeate media discourses, such as dignity, morality, ethics, responsibility, and compromise, are visible in journalists' discourse. These values, however, are framed as popular revolutionary demands, rather than institutional achievements. For instance, discourses of 'commitment' (*compromiso*) are common in the interviews. Both practitioners and academics consider that Cuban journalists are devoted, self-sacrificed, and committed to 'the Revolution'. However, journalists' dedication does not seem to be reciprocal. Cuban journalists denounce the mistrust of 'the Party' in their professional judgement. The lack of respect that decision-makers and government officials manifest in practice is, according to the data, an important obstacle to journalists' agency.

The lack of party reciprocity seems essential to journalists' rearticulation of moral values in professional rather than revolutionary terms. For instance, 'commitment' is not just presented in terms of defending 'the Revolution', but also defending their rights. Similarly, 'duty' is conceived as journalists' obligation to provide reliable information to citizens, and journalists' inability to accomplish this role produces significant professional frustration. Finally, 'honesty' is closely linked to 'shame', a collective sense of embarrassment that arises every time that the media constructs dishonest accounts of reality.

6.5.2 - The ‘Updating’ of the Cuban Media

The following paragraphs will discuss the contradiction between Cuban journalists’ demands for professionalisation and the failure to translate their claims into empirical change. Journalists have traditionally adapted to the pressure of ‘the Party’ and have channelled their creativity –and their cynicism– through the use of rhetorical devices, such as ‘poetic sorcery’. However, interviews with Cuban journalists and media academics reveal a progressive change of strategy, influenced by the so-called ‘Updating of the Economic and Social Model’ and the erosion of old media hegemonies. The data indicates that Cuban journalists are now going beyond rhetoric, asking for structural changes that reach both the media and the political system.

The data reveals a clear and unequivocal awareness of the need to reform media structures and journalistic practices in Cuba. This is a demand coming not only from journalists and academics, but also from the highest levels of power, who see the media as a strategic tool for renewing and maintaining their hegemony. Professional journalism could be a useful tool for ‘the Party’, as it could be used to identify social problems, and to channel social discontent before it is too late, as happened in the Soviet Union (Elizalde, 2013). The ‘Updating’ of the Cuban model, although explicitly claiming to be non-political, has put reforms under the spotlight and produced a rich and robust debate in all spheres of society, including the news media. This debate, however, has failed to produce tangible results by itself, thus the mainstream media remains stubbornly ‘official’. This point is essential, as many decision-makers still conceptualise journalism as an ideological tool at the service of ‘the Revolution’, dismissing liberal values as bourgeois.

Fidel Castro addressed journalists’ responsibility for the problems not just in journalism, but in Cuban society, in a letter responding to a journalist who had blamed corruption for having eradicated the ideals of socialism. Fidel’s answer is an example of the way in which structural problems are rearticulated as personal responsibility:

You [the journalist] asserted with honesty that you are not interested in a grey, short-sighted, and boring socialism. The degree to which it becomes boring, short-sighted and grey will depend, among others, on the use that our journalists make of the mass media that the Revolution has put in their hands. (Castro, 2008)

This journalists’ definition of the problems facing socialism are echoed in the words that Raúl Castro chose a few years later when describing the Cuban media as ‘*boring, improvised, and superficial*’ (Castro, 2011). The above quote is also an example of the government’s ability to absorb criticism from within.

The ‘Updating’ of the system has been accompanied by a campaign against secrecy, promoted by political leaders, as well as the institutional media. The 2007 resolution of the ‘Politburo of the Central Committee’ (‘*Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba*’) to increase informational efficacy states that, except for state and military secrets, nobody has the right to deny information to journalists. While the role of the media was not addressed in the ‘guidelines of the economic and social policies of the Party and the Revolution’ (González García, 2012), Raúl Castro (2011) acknowledged the vicissitudes that journalists endure when trying to obtain information from sources in the central report to the VI Congress (2011). Similarly, August’s (2013) ethnographic research reveals that journalists perceive access to sources as one of their main obstacles. The anti-secrecy battle has also been promoted by the Union of Cuban Journalists (UPEC), which has a section on their website named ‘*Sin secretismo*’ (or ‘Without secrets’), and which publishes journalists’ experiences with administrative workers and public organisations who deny them information (Marrero, 2013).

Cuban newspapers have occasionally denounced the sources’ refusal to fulfil media regulation. For instance, a journalist published an article in which she condemned the systematic denial of information to journalists by a range of sources:

Yet, here they are: virtually insurmountable public officials, who are only accessible at meetings and ceremonies; administrative workers who blame the blockade and the enemy’s bedevilment; managers who hide behind notional rules; public relations who obstruct access. (García, 2009)

Similarly, *Granma* published an opinion piece signed by Cuban journalist Anneris Ivette Leyva on 8 July 2011, declaring access to information a citizen’s right. The opening paragraph of the article reads as follows:

Providing systematic, truthful, diverse information that allows us to address reality from all points of view, as complex as it may be, does not constitute a favour, but a people’s right. (Leyva, 2011: 8)

The article accuses administrative officers and bureaucrats of purposely hindering journalists’ access to information of public interest. Consequently, Cuban journalists struggle to deliver relevant and pertinent information to citizens. This was not the first time that the official newspaper of the CCP publicly denounced the roots of secrecy and censorship.

The Union of Journalists’ Code of Ethics (2013b) recognises journalists’ right to access public information, and to confront those organisms that obstruct this access (arts. 3 and 4). However,

journalists cannot use the media in order to discredit or slander people and institutions (art. 7). There is an explicit reference to the denigration of other journalists or media outlets, which is forbidden (art. 11). Similarly, journalists cannot use the media to ‘undeservedly’ exalt non-revolutionary projects (art. 7). While triumphalism is considered unethical, so is hypercriticism and the manipulation of information (art. 7). Furthermore, the ability of journalists to influence the media agenda is dependent on the fulfilment of the editorial line and informational policies of their institution (although they can participate in its production, and assessment) (art. 14).

The interviews reveal that scholars and practitioners are pressing for extending the ‘Updating’ of ‘the Revolution’ to the ideological field, allowing for a structural change in the media and the political system in line with the ongoing socio-economic and technological changes (Garcés, 2013). Yet, current debates are still quite contradictory. The conflicting environment of official messages for openness and systemic immobility can have both positive and negative repercussions. According to the data, this can be positive because it gives hope to practitioners, and legitimises attempts to promote changes from within. However, it could also be negative because there are still too many people with decision-making power that are personally afraid of change, and do not allow journalists to dig deeper. At the same time, journalists are often materially deprived. If they had material stimuli, or a promise for professional advancement, or other promising job prospects, many consider that it would be easier to push for more ideal changes. However, nobody wants to personally assume the risk of going one step too far, and risk losing their job or their professional status. The following sections will discuss the influence of political and technological changes in the ‘Updating’ of Cuban journalism.

6.5.3 - Repackaging the Media in the Digital Age

Whereas ‘the Revolution’ has been able to integrate journalists’ demands in the past, recent changes in the media and technological landscape have enabled the appearance of new spaces online, ending the hegemonic control of the media system. In the past, journalists’ demands have been integrated in equivalential chains. In other words, journalistic demands have been either acknowledged by the leadership and co-opted, or simply dismissed as external to the revolutionary goals, and denied any symbolic space. Cuban journalists were left with two options: to accept a Party-led rearticulation of their demands (even if cynically), or leave the profession and/or the country. However, the new scenario provides a third alternative, that is, the unification of a surplus of journalistic demands around new social structures, independent from direct Party control.

The interviews suggest that ‘the Party’ has lost its communicational hegemony, as Cubans now have access to non-institutional channels of information.⁸³ The Internet and digital technologies are broadening the range of spaces for entertainment and interpersonal communication and, despite limited citizen access to the Internet, journalists, academics and students are increasingly using the Internet and social media to discuss citizen’s concerns, denounce the mainstream media’s omissions, leak corruption cases, and debate the future of the country.⁸⁴ In this respect, new technologies have provided Cuban intellectuals with a new sense of agency, as they are now able to bypass Party control not only in the way in which they access information, but also in the way they disseminate it (Díaz Rodríguez and Firuzeh Sokooh, 2013; Venegas, 2007).

Nowadays, journalists are able to work for independent media outlets, building a project that competes with the hegemonic discourse of the mainstream media. Whereas some of them use these new spaces to construct anti-revolutionary structures of meaning, other journalists are constructing non-oppositional yet non-institutional discourses, offering alternative readings to the nature of ‘the Revolution’ itself. This latter group is challenging and, therefore, rendering visible the fictitious articulation of revolutionary unity in the institutional media. Furthermore, they are confronting the official discourse through a counter-hegemonic rearticulation of meaning.

While recognising the dislocative power of the United States, the interviewees disarticulate the equivalential chains by which hegemony was exercised through an externalisation of dislocation. Instead, they claim dislocation to be internalised so as to rearticulate the equivalential chains that give coherence to ‘the Revolution’ under a different logic. In these alternative chains, ‘the Revolution’, ‘the people’ and the nation remain essential signifiers. The greatest difference, though, is the move from the externalisation to the internalisation of ‘the enemy’. Crises are not just seen as the systematic result of a Revolution that has been led astray from its democratic principles by an evil external enemy. Instead, crises are seen to be the product of accidental, but also purposive internal distortions of the revolutionary project. Since the institutional system has

⁸³ Nowadays, Cubans can access their email accounts on their mobile phones, connect to the Wi-Fi provided by the state-run telecommunications company ETECSA (or hack into other private Wi-Fi networks), exchange information through SMS and email chains, download and disseminate the PDF version of independent and foreign publications, and access entertainment and news from the weekly package, which contains a terabyte of information and is distributed weekly through data storage devices.

⁸⁴ According to official sources, 35% of Cubans were internet users in 2015 (from 27 in 2014), however this includes the fact that some professional bodies, such as academics, journalists, artists or scientists have dial-up access home. For more details regarding access to the Internet and digital technologies, see ONE (2015b). Current access to the Internet is expected to rise after a tariff reduction for pre-paid internet cards, also called ‘tarjetas Nauta’ (from about US\$4.5 to US\$2 per hour) and the opening of thirty-five Wi-Fi areas in July 2015. There are also plans for extending residential dial-up access.

become inept at mitigating journalists' frustration, petitions are accumulating against a new internal enemy, the status-quo.

On the one hand, journalists and academics are immersed in conversations and negotiations with the revolutionary leadership, focusing on the political structures on which the media depend. Therefore, they are demanding internal political dislocation as the only way of achieving a professionalisation of Cuban journalism. For instance, the doctoral research of Elizalde (2013) has found a clear correlation between the material hardship of journalists, external political control, and deprofessionalisation. Her research indicates that it is not the absence of journalists' professional skills that leads to a lack of trust from 'the Party' and to poor remuneration, but quite the opposite. This is coherent with the account of some of the more 'radical' interviewees who argue that the symptoms are often confused with the disease, and that both the origin and the solution to journalists' problems is political. Limited media coverage is linked to deprofessionalisation and lack of economic and professional choices, which leads to *acomodamiento* and cynicism. According to the interviewees, the best journalists are those who take more risk, those who try to expand the limits of what can be published.

The data indicates that 'the Revolution' will manage to keep its cohesive power inasmuch as it is able to disaggregate 'the Cuban people', to free 'the people' from the weight of revolutionary equivalence. This can be achieved through the creation of institutional channels of negotiation within the limits of what is 'possible'. The interviewees assert that any resolution of national problems needs to follow the articulation of a logic of difference. If disaggregated demands are not successfully managed from within the revolutionary media system, they will accumulate outside of the revolutionary institutional space. This non-institutional aggregation is already taking place with the rise of independent blogs, the consolidation of alternative digital media projects, the blooming of intellectual debate in social media, and the popularity of off-line channels that disseminate information and entertainment –such as the 'weekly package' (Henken, 2017).

The Internet and digital technologies have the potential to create a virtual forum in which citizens can claim their voice in civil society and in the political process (Henken and Ritter, 2014). However, Cuban blogs and digital media still operate in a highly-polarised context, in which critical bloggers are accused of being *oficialistas* or pro-government propagandists by some, while seen as US mercenaries by others (Henken, 2011; Rubira and Gil-Egui, 2013; Díaz Rodríguez and Sokoo Valle, 2013: 64). This has led some scholars to wonder about potential of these new spaces for creating a deliberative debate (Gil-Egi, 2013).

Whereas Cuban citizens now have access to public spaces of debate, independent from ‘the Party’ and the institutional media, mere access to the Internet and digital media does not ensure these spaces will become inherently democratic, or democratising (Voltmer, 2013: 61). New technologies reflect the political and social structures, as well as the cognitive paradigms of the society in which they are used. The data suggests that this access needs to go hand in hand with structural change, and a meaningful debate around the current paradigms that give meaning to ‘the Revolution’. According to Voltmer (2013: 57), access to the Internet and digital media platforms can only put people in touch with new ideas as long as all media actors are willing to accept dissent, and to recognise different arguments as rational and honest.

6.5.4 - Towards the Rearticulation of the Media System

One of the key findings of the thesis is journalists’ and media experts’ early awareness of the propagandistic role of the media, and their efforts to professionalise journalism whilst resisting Party pressure. While the data reveals journalists’ collaboration with Party propaganda, and their contribution to the creation of state-led equivalential chains, these collaborations are not the result of alienation, naivety or irrationality. The data indicates that journalists accept a certain degree of compliance with the revolutionary hegemonic project, understood as a project that represents and protecting national and popular interests. However, compliance intertwines with heated debate between journalists, pressures to negotiate media policies with ‘the Party’, and also professional resistance. Finally, the data suggests that, while demands for professionalisation in the mid-eighties came from a dispersed and disorganised intellectual elite, journalists have managed to create chains of equivalence and aggregate their demands around a redefinition of ‘the Revolution’ itself against a new enemy which is not external, but internal to the revolutionary process.

Whereas some accounts see journalists’ passivity as the main deterrent to change, a deeper analysis sheds light onto journalists’ early awareness of the challenges facing their profession, as well as onto their efforts to endure political propaganda. The data reveals that Cuban journalists have been actively seeking editorial autonomy since the mid-1970s. Therefore, current debates of openness and professionalisation are rooted in the 1980s’ period of ‘Rectification’, when a relaxation of Party control allowed journalists to expand their sphere of action, and to work in greater accordance with their normative values and professional ideals. However, the weak consolidation of journalists’ professional identity and the economic and ideological crises posed by the disintegration of European socialism in the early 1990s dismantled the process of these reforms, giving way to a progressive deprofessionalisation of journalism. As the crisis

strengthened the political grip over the news media, journalists tried to cover up social problems with relative success, but also mocked propaganda through a series of stylistic and rhetorical strategies as a means of resisting indoctrination. As the interviews have shown, it is not coincidental that current negotiations with ‘the Party’ are being led by journalists and academics that joined the profession around the period of ‘Rectification’, and who now occupy positions of power.

While the official narrative privileges unity over difference, ‘the Revolution’ has also been characterised from the outset by internal tensions, processes of cultural resistance and negotiation, repressive measures, as well as personal and collective sacrifice (Guerra, 2012; Kapcia, 2014). This is coherent with the data, since journalists have denounced external control, material hardship, and deprofessionalisation, at least since the 1970s.

In the current context of ‘Updating’, the data indicates two apparently contradictory trends. On the one hand, official discourses of media openness and Party-led debates are having little impact on journalistic practices, since the structure of the media system remains untouched. On the other hand, the interviews also reveal that media scholars’ and practitioners’ sense of agency has increased over the last few years. The data suggests Cuban academics and practitioners are not only trying to push the boundaries of what can be publicly discussed, but are going one step further, debating structural changes face-to-face with decision-makers.

The goal is to convince decision-makers of the dangers of a dysfunctional media system, versus the advantages of guaranteeing freedom of speech, engaging citizens in a media-led public debate around the future of ‘the Revolution’, and facilitating a renewal of consensus from within. Finally, the data indicates that current debates will be insufficient unless they encompass: (1) the true will of ‘the Party’ to change the economic, political and legal structure in which the media operate, (2) a change in mentality that puts democratisation and citizens’ rights first.

The importance of journalism schools in influencing the professional ideals and normative values of journalists has been highlighted in previous research (Donsbach, 2012; Nygren and Stigbrand, 2014; Örnebring, 2012). On the one hand, these values interact with the broader political, organisational, and professional context that students discover when they join the newsroom (Weaver and Willnat, 2012). On the other hand, the close relationship between the Faculty of Communication in Havana and journalists is welcomed on both sides of the profession: by university deans and by editors-in-chief (see chapter three for more details). In Cuba, it is common to find newspaper editors who teach undergraduate students and, simultaneously, study masters in Journalism Studies and work in the institutional media. Similarly, deans, former deans,

and heads of department have all been well-known journalists. This dual role as practitioners and academics produces a complex professional identity that, despite systemic, organisational and material limitations, keeps the normative ideals alive in the mind-set of journalists. While the results of academic research do not seem to influence improvements of journalistic practice, they help consolidate collective awareness and professional consensus. The data suggests that switching back and forth from their identity as journalists, and as academics, increases their awareness and benefits the formulation of unfulfilled demands that could potentially lead to change.

Final Remarks

From the analysis of the interviews, it seems that erosion of the unity and the ‘society under siege’ paradigms has been reinforced by the intellectual elite’s increasing access to the Internet, and the proliferation of blogs, digital media platforms and access to social media. Elites’ access to the Internet and digital media has consolidated the appearance of independent, non-bureaucratic media actors and outlets, breaking with the estate monopoly on flows of information and its ability to impose a single hegemonic debate. However, the limits of belonging or not to ‘the Revolution’ have been blurred, as there are increasing voices that declare themselves revolutionary, yet are highly critical of ‘the Party’. These voices are contributing to this shift from an external enemy, from the external blockade on Cuba, to the internal problems of ‘the Revolution’, in an exercise of introspection and self-criticism that pressures political leaders to take public responsibility for their mistakes. The focus is turning, therefore, towards what Henken and Ritter (2014) have called the ‘internal embargo’ that ‘the Revolution’ has imposed on itself. For instance, there have been some changes over the last few years, such as a column in *Granma* dedicated to reader’s letters, the possibility for readers to comment on news stories online, the coverage of relatively polemical topics, such as corruption, and material shortages, as well as a campaign against secrecy promoted by the Union of Cuban Journalists (UPEC).

Conclusion

In her book on the grand narratives of ‘the Revolution’, Cuban-American scholar Lillian Guerra (2012) examines the roots of Cuban citizens’ commitment to sacrifice. When I read Guerra’s book, I could not help but wonder: Why do Cuban journalists put up with so much sacrifice? Why do they work for a system that curtails their professional freedom and obliges them to work two jobs to make ends meet? A great deal of my research has focused on trying to solve the apparent contradiction that guides Cuban intellectuals’ commitment to the 1959 Revolution. After years conducting research on Cuban media, the idea of sacrifice still resonates in my mind.

This thesis looks at the way in which political identities are discursively constructed in media discourse. More specifically, it examines the way in which the Cuban state-owned newspaper *Granma* has articulated ‘the people’ in times of national debate. The goal is to understand the ways in which a particular representation of collective identity legitimises the inclusion/exclusion of individuals from political debate, and how this has evolved over time. Applying Discourse Theory (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) to the study of the press in revolutionary Cuba, I have examined the structures of meaning that have anchored a particular construction of being Cuban. I have developed a methodological approach that combines discourse theoretical analysis (Carpentier and De Cleen, 2007), discourse historical analysis (De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak, 1999) and qualitative interviews with Cuban journalists. This has enabled me to look at populist discourse as a logic of articulation (through spatial metaphors), as well as at the ways in which such articulation is materialised (strategies of nomination, categorization and argumentation). The thesis has been structured around three axes: (1) articulation (re-production), (2) disarticulation (contestation) and (3) rearticulation of collective identities.

This thesis contends that the Cuban Revolution has become an ‘empty signifier’ able to integrate popular demands in times of crisis. The state-run media has contributed to the creation of nodal points of stable signification around which ‘the Revolution’ has been symbolically constructed and legitimised, such as ‘the people’, ‘the enemy’ or ‘the nation’. These nodal points have been integrated into equivalential chains, sharing their adherence to ‘the Revolution’, and their antagonism towards an enemy that disrupts the achievement of revolutionary goals. The data indicates that the leadership has been capable of coping with unsatisfied popular demands through state-managed hegemonic interventions, which have managed to renew the cohesive power of nodal points.

The analysis of the call to the IV and the VI Congresses of the Communist Party of Cuba, and of the Congresses themselves, highlights an encompassing reference to pre-revolutionary and Revolutionary Cuban history as a means of legitimisation and inspiration. Therefore, the data suggests that one of the main discursive articulations of revolutionary hegemony has been based on the assimilation of national independence and revolution. In this sense, the Cuban Revolution is presented as a logical sequence in a historical, unfinished struggle for national independence.

The unfinished process of national independence has been conditioned by the existing internal and external enemies that have divided ‘the Cuban people’, and diverted the course of ‘the Revolution’ itself. Therefore, the role of the revolutionary newspaper, *Granma* has been to build and to stabilize a strong unity around a chain of concepts, namely the chain People-Patria-Socialism, which ensures the accomplishment of popular sovereignty, independence and communism.

Despite the historical strength of nodal points, interviews with Cuban practitioners and media experts suggest that journalists are advocating for a return of ‘the people’ and their interests to the centre of ‘the Revolution’. This implies demassifying ‘the people’, rearticulating them as individual citizens rather than heroes –even at the cost of challenging Fidel Castro’s code of honour (Galeano, 2015). The analysis of the interviews reveals that, while the values of sacrifice, commitment, and dignity still guide the discourse of Cuban journalists, they are being disarticulated from the revolutionary discourse, and are being rearticulated around professional demands.

This thesis aims at contributing to three fields of research: the de-westernisation of media studies, the systematisation of Discourse Theory, and the understanding of journalists and media experts’ demands in authoritarian contexts. In the context of transitional democracies (Zielonka, 2015; Voltmer, 2013), this thesis demonstrates that national debate can be used as a strategy for rearticulating popular demands around the system, and maintaining the hegemonic order despite an appearance of pluralism, and political openness. Second, this thesis contributes to the understanding of the role of journalists not just as passive supporters of a hegemonic system, but also as critical agents of change that accumulate an often-invisible potential for rearticulating alternative imaginaries. This thesis addresses the complex motivations of journalists to cooperate with a media system that contradicts their professional normative ideals (Mellado, 2014; Hanitzsch, 2007). However, it demonstrates that contradictions can also take place at the level of political discourse. In cases like Cuba or China, politicians can clearly state normative rights without making the changes necessary to develop them in practice (Hassid and Repnikova, 2016).

On the one hand, this work has analysed the elements that can slow-down journalistic-led change of media models. For instance, one of the main findings has been the importance of material constraints and the weight of historical moral values as demobilising factors. On the other hand, it has also discussed the importance of certain elements for rearticulating professionals' unfulfilled demands around alternative conceptualisations of the media. One of the main findings has been the multiple ways in which journalists working in authoritarian contexts can reassert their autonomy, using for example a creative style of writing, pushing the boundaries of what can be publicly discussed from within, or simply channelling personal frustration towards the development of individual projects, such as blogs. The data indicates, however, the importance of quality academic research, as well as a close relationship between journalists and media scholars. In the Cuban case, academic and intellectual polemics have been essential for boosting professional agency and autonomy. For instance, the data suggests that the publication of Julio García Luis' (2004) doctoral thesis has become a key element in facilitating the visibility of journalists' demands.

This thesis has contributed to the systematisation of Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) Discourse Theory in media studies. First, this thesis has demonstrated that both a populist and an institutional logic of internal debate can contribute to the stabilisation and renewal of hegemonic meanings. Second, drawing on the work of Nico Carpentier and Benjamin de Cleen (2007), this thesis has highlighted the need to understand discourse theoretical analysis from a historical perspective. The naturalisation of a set of people's roles and values seems to be at the heart of stable chains of significance. In the case of Cuba, the hegemonic construction of an '*elliptic historical tale*' (Quiroga, 2005: 10) has contributed to a collective construction of national invincibility, stressing the importance of solving Cuban problems from within. Therefore, the combination of discourse theoretical analysis and a discourse historical approach can help to understand the complex logics that articulate national belonging. More important, the analysis of the Cuban media's construction of 'the people' indicates the importance of focusing not only on strategies of articulation and disarticulation of nodal points, but on a contextualised analysis of potential rearticulations. This is a gap in the literature on Discourse Theory that needs to be further addressed.

Finally, this thesis contributes to debates on the relationship between media and populism that have been developed, among others, by Hawkins (2010), Mazzoleni, Stewart and Horsfield (2003), or Dahlberg (2011). The analysis of Cuban media articulations of populism challenges the idea that populism is necessarily anti-elitist. Instead, it demonstrates that 'the enemy' can be

constructed as external to the government even when the populist discourse itself becomes hegemonic, and institutionalised.

This thesis contends that a media articulation of populism can be problematic for three main reasons. First, populist discourses focus on the externalisation of popular frustration, often overlooking deficient internal structures. Second, popular unity is usually associated with shared goals and responsibilities, diluting the accountability of political leaders. Finally, the naturalisation of populism in media actors and routines restricts journalists' ability to rearticulate alternative, subjective and professional identities from within, hindering a transition from antagonistic to agonistic articulations of 'the enemy'.

Overall, the study of Cuban media has been a relevant case of analysis, since the institutional media is part of the political system and reproduces a theoretically ideal context for the analysis of media and populism. However, the case of Cuba also shows the dangers of conditioning the media to the political system, since this can foster public cynicism, distrust, and an accumulation of popular and journalistic frustrations that can be channelled outside of the system.

Reflections on the Rearticulation of Cuban Journalism

Society, due to its inherent incompleteness, is always a contingent terrain in which the struggle between '*fixing and unfixing, sedimentation and reactivation, articulation and dissemination is executed most consequentially*' (Gaonkar, 2012: 190). When disarticulation takes place at an internal level, and contradiction can be absorbed within the existing channels of a system, this disarticulation manifests itself as a simple contradiction. However, if disarticulation takes place outside of the system, and the excess of social demands cannot be articulated within existing mechanisms, the disarticulation can have structural consequences. Therefore, the rearticulation of popular and professional demands needs to take place outside of the existing system.

How have chains of articulation been created in the national Cuban newspaper, *Granma*? The data suggests that the institutional newspaper has used two strategies for articulating popular demands around the revolutionary project. First, *Granma* has used an institutional logic for articulating popular demands as internal contradictions, focusing on national unity as essential for solving problems within the institutional mechanisms of popular participation provided by 'the Party', which were broadened when necessary. Second, this mechanism was simultaneously combined with a populist logic of articulation, which constructed popular demands as external

dislocation, enhancing the antagonistic relationship with the United States. The external enemy has been articulated as responsible for the inability of the leadership to fulfil popular demands.

The analysis of semi-structured interviews with Cuban journalists, bloggers and media scholars suggests that the Cuban Revolution, as an empty signifier, has been able to articulate and rearticulate popular demands over time. However, becoming 'empty' carries its own risk. Therefore, the data indicates an increasingly weak relationship between the original revolutionary project and the way in which it is articulated in the hegemonic discourse. The articulation of 'the Cuban people', far from remaining stable, has only been temporarily fixed. Therefore, socio-economic, diplomatic and technological changes are rendering visible the contingency of the revolutionary articulation of collective identity.

According to Laclau's body of theory, when existing social structures are unable to integrate new 'subject positions' into the available equivalential chains, new political subjects emerge and try to reconfigure social relations (Howarth, 2015: 11). From the analysis of the interviews, it seems that the traditional logics of articulation that have reinforced the hegemony of the Cuban Revolution are being disarticulated in the ongoing process of change, and especially thanks to the intellectual elite's access to non-institutionalised channels of debate. The elites' access to the Internet and digital media has consolidated the appearance of independent, non-bureaucratic media actors and outlets, breaking the estate monopoly on the flow of information and its ability to impose a single hegemonic debate. While the limits of debate remain within the limits stated by Fidel Castro in his 'Words to the Intellectuals', the data indicates that Cuban journalists, bloggers and intellectuals can no longer fulfil their professional demands within the spaces of debate instituted by 'the Party'. Instead, they are claiming a structural change to the Cuban media system, and increasingly articulating their demands in non-institutional, alternative spaces of debate. Furthermore, a number of revolutionary intellectuals is asking for a radical change of the media model. This would enable a rearticulation of media discourse in a way that is more coherent with the normative ideals of both the revolutionary project and journalistic values. For Cuban scholar Rafael Hernández, *'assimilating concepts such as human rights, civil society, pluralism, democracy, transition, freedom of expression, is a cultural and theoretical operation that passes through accumulated social knowledge'*, which allows us to see these concepts as compatible with the revolutionary thought (Hernández, 2003: 26-27). Will the new revolutionary meaning be filled with those values, leaving behind the polarising 'national unity' versus 'sieged society' paradigms?

From the analysis of the interviews, it seems that erosion of the ‘national unity’ and the ‘sieged society’ paradigms has been reinforced by the increasing access of the intellectual elite to the Internet and new digital technologies. This has improved debates on Cuba’s social and political situation on social media, blogs, and non-institutional digital media platforms. The elites’ access to the Internet and digital media has consolidated the appearance of independent, non-bureaucratic media actors and outlets, breaking the estate monopoly on information flows and its ability to impose a single hegemonic debate. On the other hand, the limits of belonging have become blurry, since there are now a range of voices that see themselves as revolutionary, yet critical of ‘the Party’. These voices are contributing to a change from the external enemy to the internal problems of ‘the Revolution’ in an exercise of introspection and self-criticism that demands political leaders to take public responsibility for their mistakes. The focus is changing, therefore, towards what Henken and Ritter (2014) have called the internal embargo that ‘the Revolution’ has imposed on itself. Furthermore, recent changes in diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States could support a transition from antagonism towards agonism, constructing the northern neighbour as a legitimate ‘other’ with which dialogue, and negotiation, are possible.

In a speech at the Union of Cuban Journalists, Raúl Garcés (2013) told media workers that if they do not build an internal consensus around a new revolutionary model, consensus will be articulated at the margin of the institutional media, and of ‘the Revolution’). Whereas it is true that the Cuban media should make an effort to better reflect citizens’ daily problems, can it be considered a problem to have alternative voices at the margins of the revolutionary consensus? Should Cuban journalists renew the revolutionary consensus from within, or should they remain open to external perspectives? The answer to these questions will be essential for the articulation of a new core around which ‘the Revolution’ is to be organised. The revolutionary leadership needs to listen to citizen’s voice in order to improve the project from within. This is the core idea of *Granma*’s section of ‘Letters to the Editor’, which publishes ‘*opinions you can agree or disagree with*’, but which ultimately intend to contribute to improve society.⁸⁵

Nowadays, the Communist Party of Cuba is facing a leadership crisis produced by the advanced age of the so-called historical leaders (those who fought against the Batista regime back in the 1950s) and the fading of Fidel Castro from public life, broadening the communication gap that

⁸⁵ This is the preface to a section in *Granma* dedicated to publishing letters from the readers. The section is called ‘Letters to the Editor’ (‘*Cartas a la Dirección*’) and has been published every Friday since 2008. The preface reads: ‘Even if we keep receiving many phone calls, letters and emails from many readers on how to keep improving our society, we decided this time to publish eight [the number of letters varies] opinions with which you can agree or disagree with.’ (*Granma*, 2010).

exists between the leadership and citizens. In addition to this, Cuba is enjoying closer relations to the rest of the world –including the United States and Latin America–, which means further closeness to different worldviews. It remains to be seen how ‘the Revolution’ adapts to current economic, political and technological changes, and negotiates an ‘Updating’ of Cuban journalism. I concur that, unless the tensions between fear and renewal are resolved to benefit the latter, the most recent attempts to reform the media will fail, as has happened in the past (Pérez González, 2008; García Luis, 2013).

Current Debates in Cuba

A close look at official debates in Cuba indicates the persistence of a contradiction between official constructions of popular participation in decision-making, and the postponement of political debate. The VII Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba took place in April 2016 without a previous call to popular debate, which was an important element of the 2011 VI Congress. The lack of debate generated a mobilisation of popular opinion and intellectuals that obliged ‘the Party’ to organise debates in working centres after the celebration of the Congress. This decision shows not only the apparent lack of political will to articulate ‘the Cuban people’ as active participants in political decision-making, but also the importance of taking into account popular demands as a means for advancing the ‘Updating’ of Cuban socialism.

Over the last few years, there has been a lingering fear that has hindered social change (Hoffman, 2011). This fear can take many shapes, and is not restricted to appeals to an external threat. The proliferation of non-dissident critical blogs and digital platforms has enhanced the fear towards internal division. The fear towards bloggers and journalists’ dissenting ideas is often disguised as official claims of ‘deprofessionalisation’ and weak ‘ethical standards’. Attacks on the lack of professionalism of non-institutional media actors has been used to undermine the quality of their work, as well as the honesty behind their intentions, leading to defamation campaigns, political pressure, and censorship (such as the temporary closure of certain blogs, or the lack of access to certain websites from the Island) (Sánchez, 2017). Often, official attacks against journalists’ lack of professionalism has been used as means for justifying greater censorship. For instance, the withdrawal of a speech that the Dean of the Faculty of Communication, Raúl Garcés, pronounced at the 2015 meeting of the Union of Cuban Journalists from the website of the Union of Cuban Journalists (UPEC) sparked indignation from professionals. The most widespread explanation in the blogosphere was that the speech was redacted. When Garcés asked the Union to publish the entirety of the speech, or to take it down altogether, it was erased from the website. This decision

had further consequences, and witnessed the dismissal of a journalist from a state-owned media outlet for reproducing the entirety of the speech on a blog. Other bloggers and journalists have used social media to denounce harassment, such as Elaine Díaz's posts on the arbitrary arrest of her team while covering the 2016 floods in Guantánamo province (Higuera, 2016; *Periodismo de Barrio*, 2016). Finally, during my last trip to Havana in 2015, I observed a lethargic attitude in the interviewees that I had not seen before. Since my first visit in 2013, several interviewees were invited to abandon the Communist Youth League or their state jobs. It seemed that official calls for media reform have not materialised, and some interviewees are losing their faith in a journalistic-led change from within.

The 'Normalisation' of an Antagonistic Enemy

Cuba was invited to participate in the 2015 Summit of the Americas for the first time (see chapter six for more details). Before the summit, the Union of Cuban Journalists (UPEC) created the pamphlet '*Mercenaries in Panama*', which included a declaration in the name of '*Cuban civil society*' against the participation of '*mercenaries*' at the event (*Cubadebate*, 2015). The document, which was disseminated during the inaugural ceremony, included pictures of oppositional activists and journalists who had obtained an accreditation to attend the summit as civil society representatives. However, the Cuban delegation arrived at Panama with a restricted view of civil society that included only revolutionary academics, members of mass organisations, and cooperative workers. The official representation of the Island organised repeated public acts of repudiation, before and after the summit, and there were even physical confrontations between representatives of both sides. The pamphlet ended with the following excerpt, which resonates with the populist articulations of unity that I have discussed in chapter four:

Cuba arrives to Panama with its head held high. It has nothing to hide, but much to contribute on different issues. It will never accept a dialogue with the ideological orphans that respond to imperialist designs. Our civil society, sovereign, plural, and revolutionary, will be ready to fight [dará la batalla], as always. And it will, because the reason and the truth are on its side. (Cubadebate, 2015)

On social networks, those who considered themselves part of civil society started a wondering who was invited to the event. Cuban blogger Carlos Alberto Pérez asked on his *Facebook* profile '*How many bloggers did the Cuban government invite to participate in the civil society delegation that went to Panama?*'. He published the question on 9 April 2015, at 23:10h, writing from the Netherlands, where he was conducting journalistic training financed by the Dutch

government. By 11 April, at 14:09 UK time, the post had generated fifty-eight comments. Blamed in one of the comments for abandoning the room at the summit, Norges Rodríguez commented that the mood had got very ugly, and that those who criticised him would have done the same thing.

While the Communist Party of Cuba has been aware of the dysfunctionalities of the Cuban media for decades, official discourses of openness have not been consistent over time, nor have they been a priority. The question remains to which degree current discourses of openness are coherent with the attempt of ‘the Party’ to hold on to its communicational hegemony. This dilemma is not easily solved by simplistic assumptions, claiming that attempts of reform are only a charade, or that they are somehow meaningless. Rather they require a close examination of the elements that have hindered the materialisation of change (Chanan, 2001; Leyva and Somohano, 2008; Pérez González, 2008; Kapcia, 2014).

Limitations and Future Research

Conducting a research project on a country that is undergoing structural transformations had its risks. This thesis has made an effort to take into account the latest political and economic changes that are unfolding on the Island. For instance, it has updated the interviews when possible, and has tried to incorporate the significance of current debates in the discussion of the findings.

When the idea of this project first emerged in 2013, it seemed that Raúl Castro’s leadership had already set the path for change in the 2011 ‘guidelines’ for the ‘Updating’ of Cuban socialism. Because of the nature of this project, I was more interested in the process of debate that led to the approval of the final ‘guidelines’ than in their practical implementation. While this was true for the first couple years of this project, Cuba’s political landscape began undergoing historic transformations in late 2014. The first sign that something significant was to come was the publication of a series of five editorials on US-Cuba relations in the *New York Times* from 11 October to 14 November 2014, the first of which called for the end to the US embargo on the Island.

On 17 December 2014, Raúl Castro and Barack Obama announced the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States, and the exchange of political prisoners (among them, the three remaining members of the Cuban ‘Five Heroes’ that were discussed in chapters four and five). Since then, the United States has eliminated Cuba from the list of countries that promote terrorism, has loosened the embargo, and has ended Bill Clinton’s policy

of ‘wet feet-dry feet’, which granted Cubans who arrived on US soil the automatic right to stay. Meanwhile, the Communist Party of Cuba has held the seventh Congress in 2016 without a call to popular debate. The same year, Raúl Castro acknowledged a severe economic crisis, mainly due to Cuba’s energy dependence on a politically unstable Venezuela. Finally, Cubans witnessed the founding father of ‘the Revolution’ pass away in November 2016.

This thesis has interviewed Cuban journalists living on the Island, and working within the limits of belonging, that is, within the symbolic limits established in Fidel Castro’s 1961 ‘Words to the Intellectuals’. This implies that the Cuban diaspora, that is, Cuban journalists that write about the Island from abroad, have not been taken into account. This thesis has not included the voice of Cuban bloggers and journalists that are identified as dissidents. While this is a limitation, the goal was to understand the position of those working from inside, and those who negotiate their position within the limits of revolutionary belonging.

Quiroga’s (2005) idea of a Cuban ‘elliptical history’ is at the roots of populism, and is a way of understanding national belonging as antagonistically linked to a hubristic elite, whether in Miami, or in Havana. Conducting this research has brought me to realise that this historical ellipsis is also at the roots of national reconciliation. In May 2015, the organisers of the monthly space for debate ‘*Last Thursday*’ (‘*Último Jueves*’) attended the congress of the Latin American Studies Association, held in New York, and organised panels that brought together both Cuban researchers and the Cuban diaspora. Soon after, the Cuban academic journal *Temas* organised a *Last Thursday* in Miami for the first time. These experiences show the importance of understanding not only discursive constructions of national unity in the institutional media, or in dissident digital platforms, but the possibilities of the Internet for bringing together Cubans living inside and outside the Island, and defending a range of ideological positions.

I cannot say that this thesis has answered all questions regarding the Cuban institutional media, and Cuban populism. I remain curious as to how the recent rapid changes are affecting the Cuban media system. However, I have enjoyed the path I have taken: one that has taught me about discourse analysis, psychoanalysis, media and populism; and about Cuba and Latin America, in general. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to explore these themes in depth, and I hope this thesis fosters academic research on the Cuban media.

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Annexes

Annex I: Access to Thesis Form



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Registration Number	120215331	Department	Journalism Studies
Thesis Title	The Historical Articulation of 'the People' in Revolutionary Cuba. Media Discourses of Unity		

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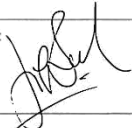
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Annex II: Content Analysis

This annex presents some of the results of the content analysis of Cuban newspaper *Granma*. The analysis was conducted on Atlas.ti, through a manual coding of pictures of news stories. Therefore, the software could not be used for word searches. All the words were manually located in the text and attributed a code. Then, I searched through the codes and narrowed down the categories. The content analysis was used as a preliminary guide for the discourse analysis. Therefore, it was important to keep the nuances and the richness of the codes as they appeared in

the text. Greater abstraction at this step would have hindered, rather than helped the discursive analysis of news stories.

Table 1 - Different Constructions of ‘the Enemy’ in *Granma*

P1 (1990-1991) enemy/voice		P2 (2010-2012) enemy/voice	
External	48	External	45
Internal	28	Internal	16
Alternatives to socialism	3	Embargo	19
Batista	5	Bourgeoisie (democracy)	0
Embargo	4	Bureaucracy	2
Bourgeoisie (democracy)	3	Capitalism	6
Bureaucracy	15	CIA	5
Capitalism	31	Colonial Spain	5
Colonial Spain	9	Corruption	x
Corruption	2	Counterrevolutionary elements	2
Counterrevolutionary-antisocial elements	5	David Goliath	12
Rich countries	2		
David-Goliath	12	Delinquency	1
Delinquency	10	Opposition	1
Discrimination	1	Discrimination	
Non-specified Enemy	14	Non-specified Enemy	18
Foreign Press	1	FMI	1
Gringos	1	Foreign Press	2
Hyper-criticism	1	Gringos	x
Imperialism	41	Hyper-criticism	x
Machado dictatorship	1	Imperialism	23
Global markets	6	Machado dictatorship	x
Mercenaries, ‘ <i>gusanos</i> ’	3	Global markets	5
Non-patriotic people	1	Mercenaries, ‘<i>gusanos</i>’	6
Other wars	2	Non-patriotic people	x
Pluripartidism	3	OEA-conservative Latin America	2
Problems Eastern Europe	3	OTAN	3
The internal all powerful who cheated	1	Oligarchy (foreign)	x
Those against independence	1	Other wars	x
Those who attack-assault	1		
Those who decide not to be part of Revolution	1	Pluripartidism	x
Tyranny	2	Problems Eastern Europe	x
US	12	Rich countries	2
US allies	1		
Yanki	10	Rich before revolution	2
		The internal all powerful who cheated	x
		Those against independence	x
		Those against independence	3
		Those who attack-assault	x
		Those who decide not to be part of Revolution	x
		Tyranny	1
		US	39
		US allies	5
		Yanki	9

Table 2 – Different Constructions of ‘the People’ in *Granma*

P1 (1990-1991) people/voice		P2 (2010-2012) people/voice	
Artists/intellect	21	Artists and intellectuals	4
Brigades	62	Brigades	x
Cadres	28	Cadres	38
Children	10	Chávez- friends	12
Citizens	16	Children	13
Combatants	14	Citizens	20
Communist	76	Combatants	19
‘Compañeros’	43	Communists	11
Company manager	7	Communities	9
Compatriots	3	‘Compañeros’	78
Contingents	80	‘Compañeras y compañeros’ (Raúl always uses that order)	19
		Company manager	2
Cooperatives	10	Compatriot	8
Dead-blessed	4	Contingents	1
Delegates-leaders	255	Cooperatives	14
Sportsmen	1	Self-employed workers	50
Descendants	3	‘Cubanas y cubanos’	6
Different currents of opinion within	6		
Each Cuban	7	Dead-blessed	11
Elderly	4	Delegates-leaders	132
Family	15	Sportsmen	1
Farmers	61	Descendants	x
People as ‘Gente’	25	Economic Commission	1
Guests to Congress	33	Elderly	5
Heroes (Maceo, Martí, Che, Céspedes, Lenin and Marx, Mella)	126	Family	24
Internationalists	13		
Journalists	13	Farmers	31
Mass organisations	200	Public Servants	3
Masses	64	People as ‘Gente’	46
Medical workers	16	Guests to Congress	8
		Heroes (Martí, Gómez, Maceo, Che, Eduardo Delgado)	36
Men and women	21	‘Five Heroes’	12
Militants	57	Historical Leaders	10
Military	59	Intellectuals, academics, researchers	24
Multi class	3	Internationalists	4
Multi-racial	6	Journalists	8
Patriots	10	Mass organisations	19
People (‘El Pueblo’)	205	Masses	3
People as persons	6	Medical workers	6
Pioneer Movement	10	Men and women	10
Popular Power	18	Militants	43
The population	53	Military	38
Professionals teachers, professors, engineers, economists, lawyers, researchers	62	Multi class	x
Revolutionary People	9		
Slaves	6	Multi-racial	2
Students	50	Patriots	6
Tourists	6	Pueblo	141
Communist Youth League and similar	42	Pueblo as Person	24
Underdog	9	Pioneers	4
Avantgarde	16		
Women	8	Popular Power	x
		Population (only Raúl)	12
Workers	211	Professionals teachers, professors, engineers, economists, lawyers	31
		Religious	4
		Revolutionary People	2
		Slaves	2
		Non-state workers	6
		State leaders	2
		Students	23

Table 3 – Roles and Values in Comparative Perspective, Period 1 (1990-1991)

FI: Fidel Castro; R: Raúl Castro; POP: quotes from ‘the people’; LE: other leaders; HE: national heroes; INT: Intellectuals –including artists, writers, academics, journalists; PAP: the voice of *Granma*; ENEM: the external ‘enemy’– whether the United States, US leaders, capitalism; OTH: other voices.

ROLES P1
who is the
actor/who
speaks

	FI	R	POP	LE	HE	INT	PAP	OTH	ENEM	Tot.	CHAIN OF EQUIVAL.
Fulfill goals Party, people, journalists, workers, youth			x	x		x	x	7		99	Economic goals, promises to Fidel, duty, expectations
Follow Intellectuals, people, workers, youth			x	x			x			23	Ancestors, combatants, good values, leaders’ words/orders, revolutionary path
Continue/ keep Revolution, Congress, people, workers	x			x			x			73	Baraguá/ independence wars, Perfeccionamiento, Rectificación, Revolution/ working
Work	x	x	x	x			x			119	Hard, duplicate-triplicate, ask for more work, increase quality of work
Resist/ face Party, leaders, people, workers	x		x	x			x			69, from which 21 in chain against enemy	Problems and period especial, delinquency

Defend Party, leaders, military, intellectuals, people	x	x	x	x			x			114	Socialism 22, Revolution 16, patria and similar 11
Set example Militants with big difference (24), leaders, organisations, workers, people	x		x	x			x	2		50	
Fight, combati Heroes, leaders, journalism, party, people, workers	x		x	x			x			160 corru ption, indisc ipline as proble ms	Enemy or tirade, then problems or mistakes
Rectify, perfeccionar Leaders, party, people, workers/debate, congress, intellectuals, people	x		x	x			x			333	Rectificatio n usually by itself (mistakes, negative tendencies)/ socialism, party, state, society, mass organisatio ns, popular power
Strengthen Party, intellectuals, Popular Power, congress, debate			x	x			x			46	Unity, socialism, revolution, patria, socialist democracy
Study Leaders, intellectuals, people, youth			x	x		x	x			25	Ideas, call to debate
Ratify approve support Party, leaders, people, workers/ debate, assemblies, leaders, military/ people, workers	x		x	x			x		2	157	Heroes, Fidel (14), party (11), revolution (6), socialism (11), call to debate (26), Raul (1)
Save/ ahorrar Leaders, workers, people	x	x	x	x			x			116 econ. savin g/ 9 revol., the Hom., social, 14 in	

										sloga n	
Change mentality	x			x						2	
Gather, march, homage/tribute Leaders, artists, people, workers				x			x			38	
Efficacy People and workers, or in general	x		x	x			x	x8		53	
Productivity workers		x	x	x		x	x	11		58	Bureaucrac y and excess of workers damage it
Win/ victory Heroes, people, leaders, workers/heroes, Fidel, Baraguá	x	x	x	x			x			60	Unity and effort lead to victory
Participate Party, leaders, intellectuals, journalists, people	x	x	x	x			x			91	
Die										7	

VALUE who is the actor/who speaks	FI	R	PO P	LE	HE	INT	PAP	OTH	ENEM	Tot.	CHAIN OF EQUIVAL.
Moral Heroes, leaders, people, party, workers	x		x	x			x	6	2	28	Enemy immoral or trying to demoralize, problem double moral
Sacrifice Heroes, party, leaders, workers	x			x	x		x			10	Human rights conditional to those who sacrifice themselves
Heroic Heroes, party, internationalists, Santiago, people	x			x						16	Heroes eternal
Strong (see strength)	x			x			x		1	8	

Intransigent and firm-tolerance Heroes, Fidel, military, militants, people, workers			x	x			x	2		20	
Exigence (self-) Party, good leaders	x			x				6		5	
Loyalty Cadres, scientists, journalists, people (swear)	x		x	x		x	x			11	Revolution, Fidel, socialism, patria, people
Humble, underdog Heroes, internationalists, leaders							x			16	An alternative to socialism would damage underdog
Dignity (humiliation) Heroes, Party, Revolution, people, workers, youth	x			x					5	27	Revolution ensuring full dignity. Revolution, socialism, national sovereignty, independence
Honest Internationalists, debate, people	x		x	x			x		1	13	All honest men and women in planet support revolution
Trust Fidel trust victory, leaders, party trusts people, debate, journalists, researchers, people, workers	x		x	x			x		1	36	The Party trusts people to follow combatants in Sierra Maestra, who in turn followed mambises; trust in the future. Discipline increase trust
Discipline Military, Internationalists, party, people	x		x	x			x	29	1	52	Social indiscipline a big problem. This indiscipline might come from accumulated problems
Optimism, joy,	x		x	x		x	x			107	Fidel and

enthusiasm Heroes, Fidel, internationalists, leaders, party people, workers, youth											Party lead optimism to face difficulties. Often compatible with realistic.
Courage, brave Heroes, internationalists, leaders, people	x		x				x			14	
Creative, problem-solving Heroes, Fidel, party, leaders, debate, journalists, people, workers	x	x	x	x			x	6	1	83	Science big contribution to solve problems, but one says not enough, acknowledgment of some problems unsolved, unity as collective problem-solving. Party already solving problems.
Effort Party, military, journalists, people, workers, youth	x	x	x	x		x	x			83	Extraordinary effort, effort inherited,
Ethical Intellectuals, culture			x			x	x			4	To be strengthened through cultural production
Compromise Leaders, culture, debate, people, workers	x		x	x			x			16	Both with history and patria/ with production goals

Table 4 – Roles and Values in Comparative Perspective, Period II (2010-2012)

FID: Fidel Castro; RA: Raúl Castro; POP: quotes from ‘the people’; LE: other leaders; HER: national heroes; INTEL: Intellectuals –including artists, writers, academics, journalists; PAPER: the voice of *Granma*; ENEM: the external ‘enemy’– whether the United States, US leaders, capitalism; OTH: other voices.

ROLE P2 who is the actor/who speaks	FI	R	POP	LE	HE	INT	PAP	OTH	ENEM	Tot.	CHAIN OF EQUIVAL.
Fulfill goals Fidel, people, workers, leaders		x	x	x			x	24	6x	1x	Priority and problem. Fidel did, rest did not. Those who do not fulfill economic goals, punished.
Follow Party, leaders	x	x	x				x	21			Path set by Fidel/Raul, heroes, socialism, Marxism-Leninism, rules
Continue Party, leaders, youth, people, country		x		x			x	42			Continue history, legacy of Fidel
Fulfill other Heroes, historical leaders, party fulfill promises or will of heroes or Fidel		x	x	x			x	14			Mostly fulfill promises, the will of the leaders/Fidel, the expectation of people
Work People and workers, but Raul also says party and leaders		x	x	x			x	31	14x		Assumption Cuba only country world where it is possible to live without working Work as only source of income Belonging conditional to patriotism and hard work

Resist/ face Country, socialism, Cuba, heroes, Fidel, people	x	x		x		x	x	20	X1		Against enemy, except one, resist change problematic
Defend Heroes, combatants, party, leaders, artists, journalists, people, workers	x	x	x			x		43, and 2 on econ. plans			Socialism, Revolution, Patria (unity)
Set example Heroes, Raul, party, Cuba, leaders, people	x	x		x			x	20			
Fight, combatir Heroes, combatants and Fidel always fought, role of people, people volunteer. Party and leaders fight indiscipline. Role Cuba fight for rest world	X	X	X	X	x			64	X	2x	45 fight enemy pro triad, and 17 indiscipline
Rectify, perfeccionar Fidel, Raul, leaders, debate, people/ Fidel, party, leaders, people	x	x	x	x			x	57			Socialism, Revolution, society, economic model/ Mistakes, achievements
Strengthen Revolution, socialism, productivity, economy, society, system, historical memory		x	x	x			x	19		2x	
Study All people at all levels, specially delegates and leaders		x	x	x			x	40			While people study the guidelines, 'Five Heroes' and leaders/ delegates study economy
Ratify approve support Leaders, people		x	x	x	x			30	4x	4x	Mainly assumption of support to party, socialism, guidelines
Save Socialism save humanity, workers and people save (energy,	x	x	x				x	40			5 among them save patria, socialism, revolution

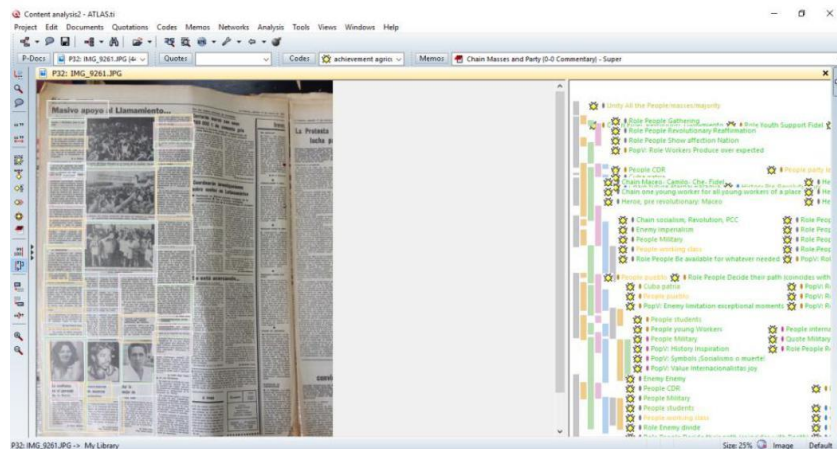
resources, materials)											
Change mentality Mainly cadres and leaders		x	x	x			x	15			
Gather, march, homage,								6			
Efficacy Mostly people and workers. One reference to system	x	x	x	x		x	x	50	16x	2x	Difficulties as excuse for lack of efficacy. Priority and problem
Productivity People and workers		x	x	x			x	58	9x		Wages and advances tied to increase of productivity. Priority and problem.
Win/ victory Historical leaders, combatants, Fidel, youth, socialism, patria				x			x	13			
Participate People, workers, cadres		x	x	x			x	22			
Military parade People, children, youth, military	x	x						41			
Die Heroes, youth, people	x	x				x		9			Die during fight, die for patria, die for people

VALUE who is the actor/who speaks	FI	R	POP	LE	HE	INT	PAP	OTH	ENEM	Tot.	CHAIN OF EQUIVAL.
Moral People, Party Fidel, historical generation, leaders, Martí,		x					x	T	1x	1x	Historical generation moral authority to correct mistakes
Sacrifice People, Revolution, youth, leaders, heroes		x					x	20			
Heroic youth, people, history, socialism, historical leadership,		x		x	x			10			Cuba example of heroism for rest of world.

workers, Cuba, combatants											
Strength People, Socialism, Revolution, heroes, Congress	x	x		x		x	x	15	2x	1x	Assumption Congress strengthen Cuba with weak countries damaged by capitalism
Intransigent and firm-tolerance Party, leaders		X		x			X	12	3x	1x	Intransigence against delinquency, discipline
Exigence (self-) Party, cadres, people, combatants		x		x			x	12	6x		
Loyalty People, leaders, (supreme in) heroes						x	x	16			Condition for debate with external organisations (catholic church)
Humble, underdog Heroes, socialism, party, people	x	x	x	x			x	6		X2	The Revolution of the underdog; they will not be forgotten Role people: give life for humble people The enemy does not protect the underdog
Dignity Party, leaders, revolution, people, socialism, youth, Martí		x		x			x	40			Socialism dignity worker's rights Freedom conditional to dignity and work
Trust Marti, combatants, leaders, militants, people, Party.	x	x	x	x			x	14			People trust party and Fidel as much as in 1959 Debate will reinforce trust people party revolution People trust leaders, and leaders trust people Do not reason Fidel, Raúl's trust

Discipline People, Party, workers, combatants, military	x	x	x	x			x	26	X9		Discipline as value and as problem. Priority. Advances conditional to discipline
Optimism, joy, enthusiasm Fidel, leaders, artists, people, youth, victory		x				x	x	29			Assumption, all joy victory
Courage, brave Heroes, combatants, leaders, youth Cuba		x		x			x	17	1x		Cuba most brave country world
Creative, problem-solving Workers, business owners, people, guidelines, congress, leaders	x	x	x	x				22	1x		Survival conditional to solving problems from within Problems mostly economic (even delinquency and indiscipline)
Effort People, leaders		x		x			x	30			Unity as shared efforts people party.
Ethical Revolution, leaders, people, workers	x	x					x	14			
Compromise Marti, people, leaders, with rest of world				x		x		7	x		
								13			

A. Frequency of Simple Codes in *Granma*, 1990-1991



B. News Stories and Codes in *Granma*, 1990-1991

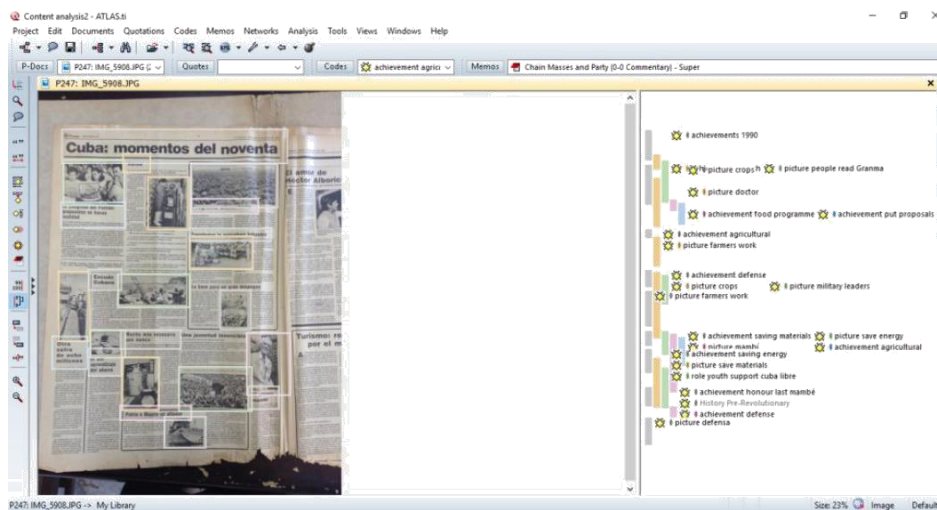
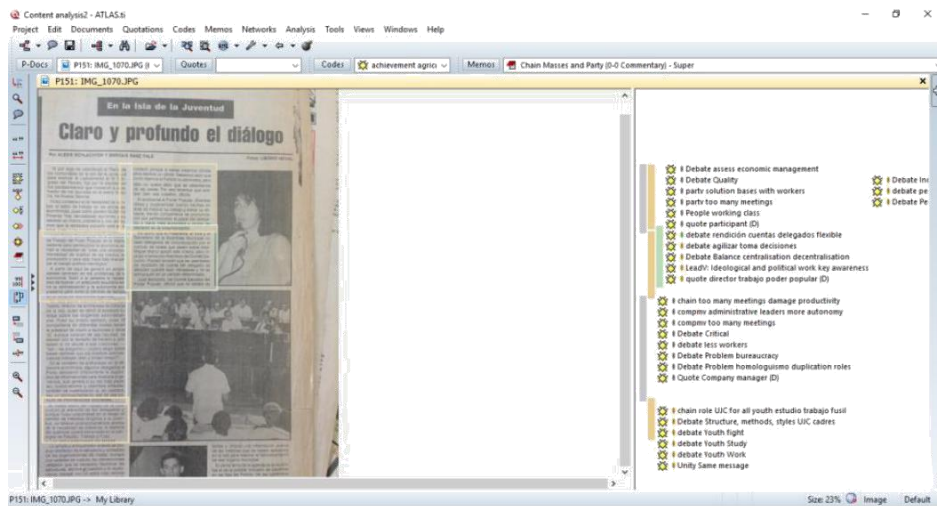
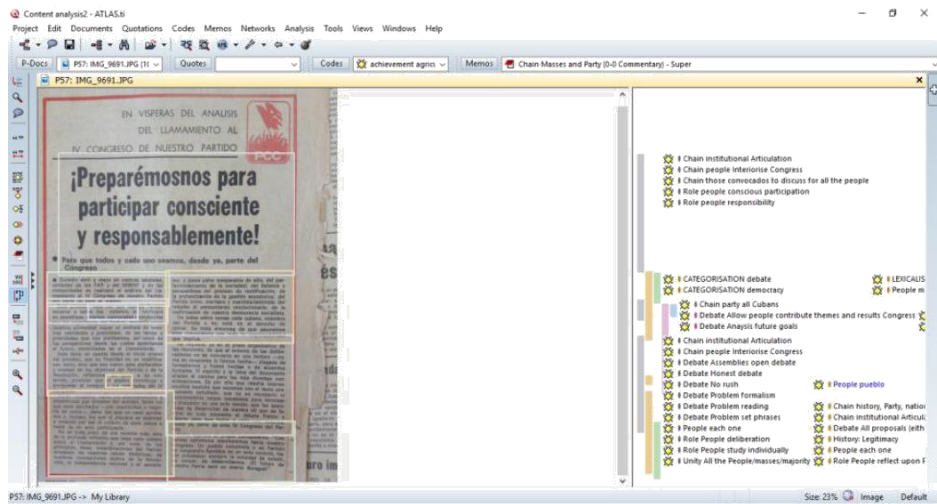
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Codes Edit Miscellaneous Output View

Search (Name)

Families	Name	Grounded	D
all Co	People pueblo	205	
Attribute	People working class	198	
Baraguá	People party leaders	160	
Chain (17)	Unity All the People/masses/majority	123	
ENEMY (5)	Unity Plural	107	
ENEMY R	Quote Party leader (I)	97	
ENEMY V	difficulties	94	
FIDEL (2)	History Places	85	
FIDEL Rol	People contingentes	80	
FIDEL Val	Unity Same message	80	
Group (2)	periodo especial	78	
HEROES	People communists	76	
HEROES I	History Pre-Revolutionary	69	
HEROES V	People party base delegates	66	
History (4)	People masas	64	
LEADERS	Fidel	62	
LEADERS	People youth	62	
PEOPLE (2)	People professionals (teachers, professors, doctors, engineers, economists, lawyers...	59	
PEOPLE R	People farmers	58	
PEOPLE V	Cuba patria	57	
Pictures (1)	People militants (members)	56	
RAUL (3)	People population	53	
RAUL Rol	hyperbole	52	
RAUL Val	Unity: From all the country Pleno Provincial	52	
Symbols (1)	People students	50	
Unity (4)	quote regional delegate I	49	
	History: Legitimacy	48	
	People Mass and political organisations	48	
	People brigadas	47	
	Quote Participant (I)	44	
	People compañeros	43	
	Unity Emotions	43	
	

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C. Excerpts from 'The People', *Granma*, 1990-1991

Report: 205 quotation(s) for 1 code

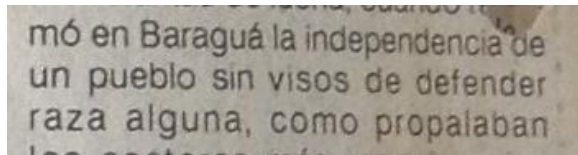
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Quotation-Filter: All

People pueblo

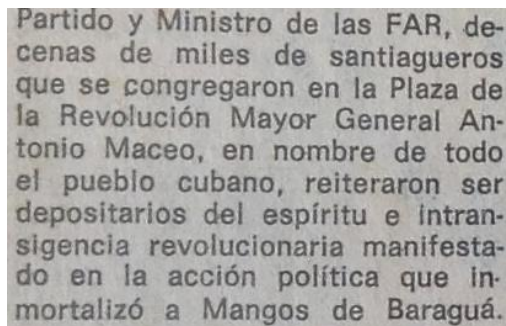
P13: IMG_9183.JPG - 13:22 [IMG_9183.JPG] (936:1028) (Super)

Codes: [People multi racial - Family: PEOPLE] [People pueblo - Family: PEOPLE]



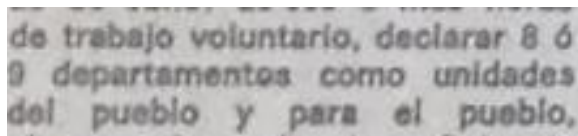
P18: IMG_9217.JPG - 18:43 [IMG_9217.JPG] (1091:1353)

Codes: [Chain continuity between Baraguá and Congress][Chain future eternal Baraguá -Family: Chain] [Chain part of the people for all: Place-based - Family: Chain][People pueblo- Family: PEOPLE][Role People Adhere to revolutionary postulates of Baraguá - Family: PEOPLE Roles][Role People revolutionary intransigence] [Unity All the People/masses/majority]



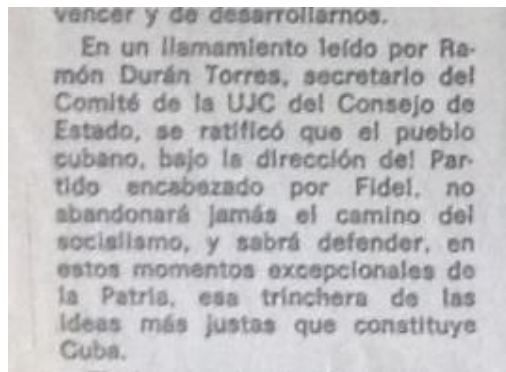
P32: IMG_9261.JPG - 32:16 [IMG_9261.JPG] (907:958)

Codes: [People pueblo - Family: PEOPLE]



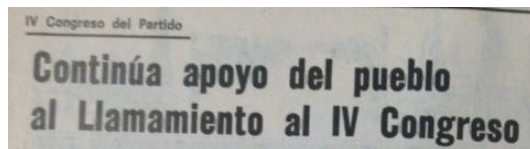
P32: IMG_9261.JPG - 32:20 [IMG_9261.JPG] (1320:1516)

Codes: [Cuba patria] [People pueblo - Family: PEOPLE] [PopV: Enemy limitation exceptional moments] [PopV: Role Fidel lead the Party] [PopV: Role Fidel lead the people][PopV: Role Party lead the people] [PopV: Role people defend Cuban ideas] [PopV: Role people ratify socialism] [PopV: Role people stand by Party and Fidel] [PopV: Value Party fairness] [Quote UJC leader (I)]



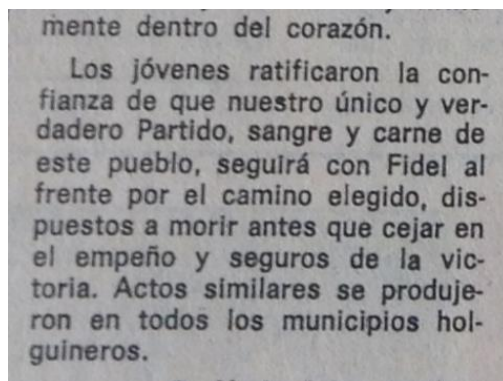
P51: IMG_9305.JPG - 51:1 [IMG_9305.JPG] (170:550)

Codes: [People pueblo - Family: PEOPLE] [Role People Support Llamamiento - Family: PEOPLE Roles]



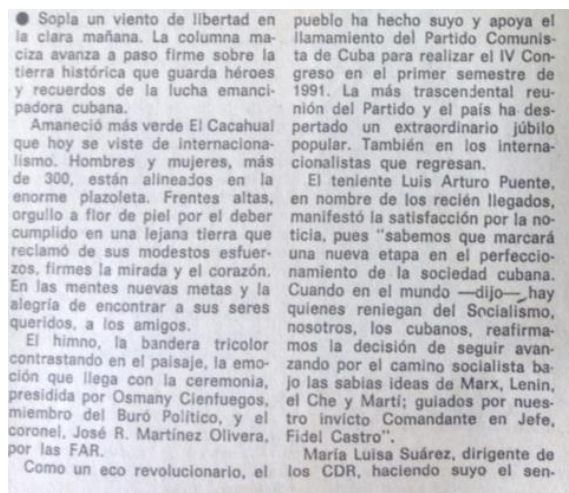
P51: IMG_9305.JPG - 51:11 [IMG_9305.JPG] (1716:2086)

Codes: [Chain youth with Party] [People pueblo - Family: PEOPLE] [Role People Win] [Role Youth Die before surrender] [Role Youth Support Fidel] [Unity From all the country - Family: Unity]



P52: IMG_9307.JPG - 52:9 [IMG_9307.JPG] (1302:2224)

Codes: [Chain party with masses - Family: Chain] [People pueblo - Family: PEOPLE] [Role Internacionalistas Support Llamamiento]



P54: IMG_9418.JPG - 54:1 [IMG_9418.JPG] (958:1338)

Codes: [People pueblo - Family: PEOPLE] [Role People Debate topics Llamamiento]

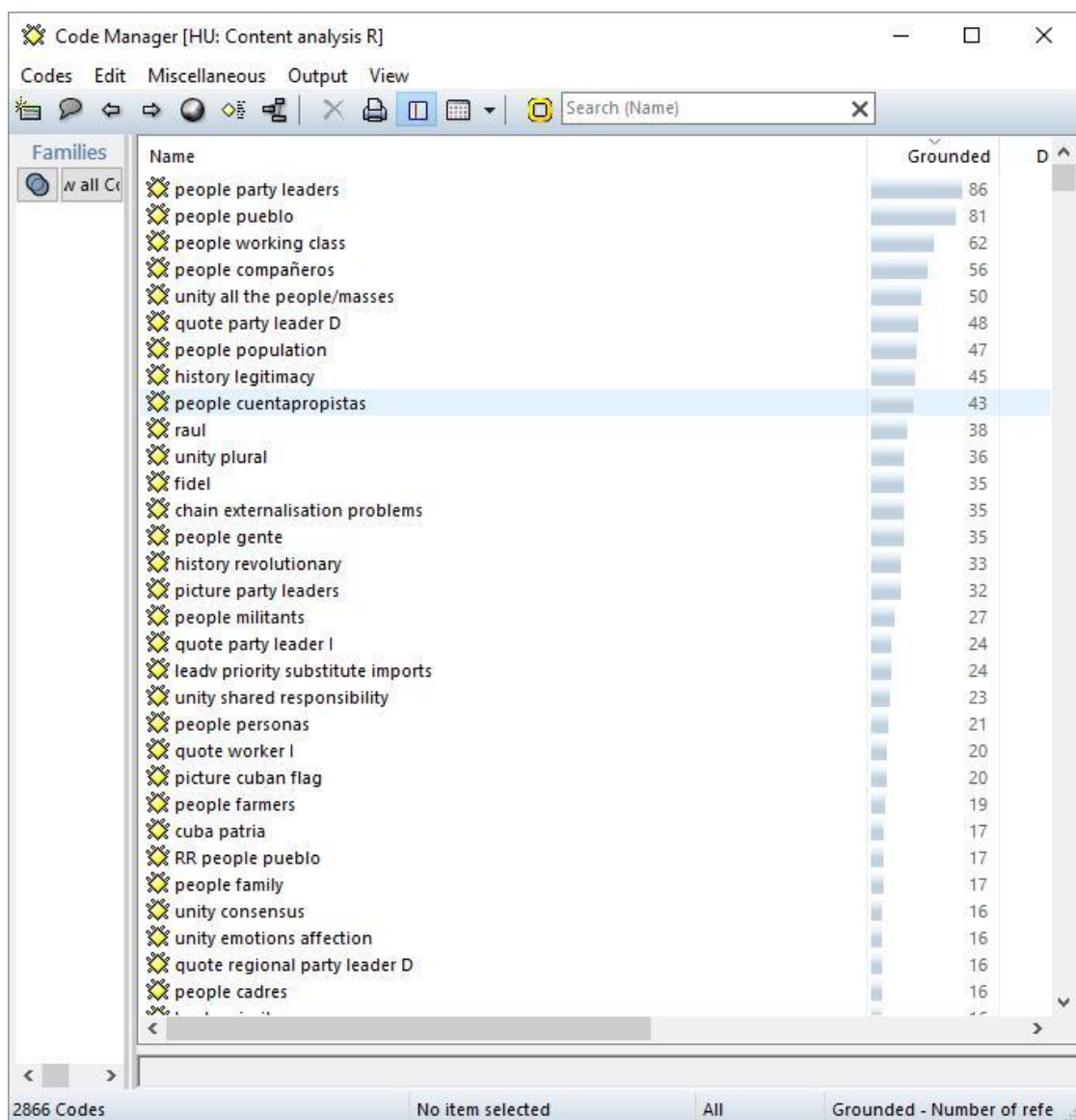


P54: IMG_9418.JPG - 54:3 [IMG_9418.JPG] (1466:1694)

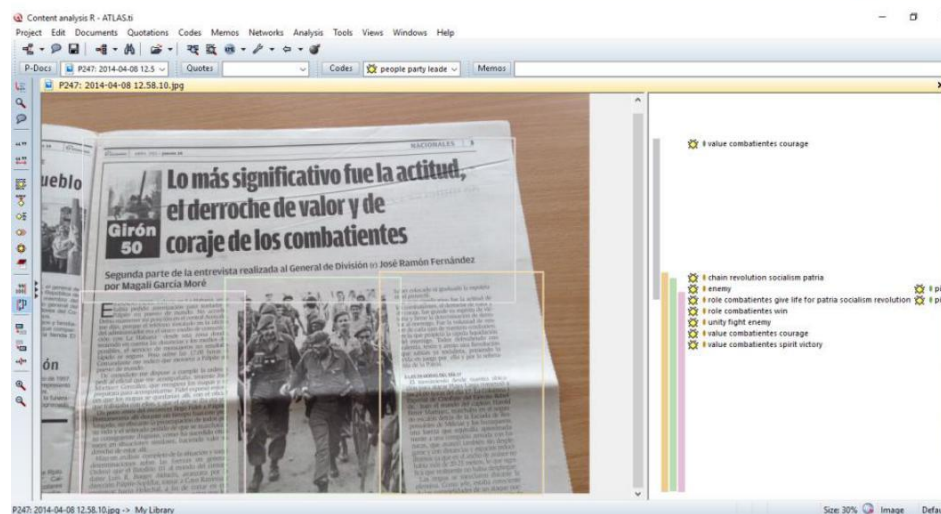
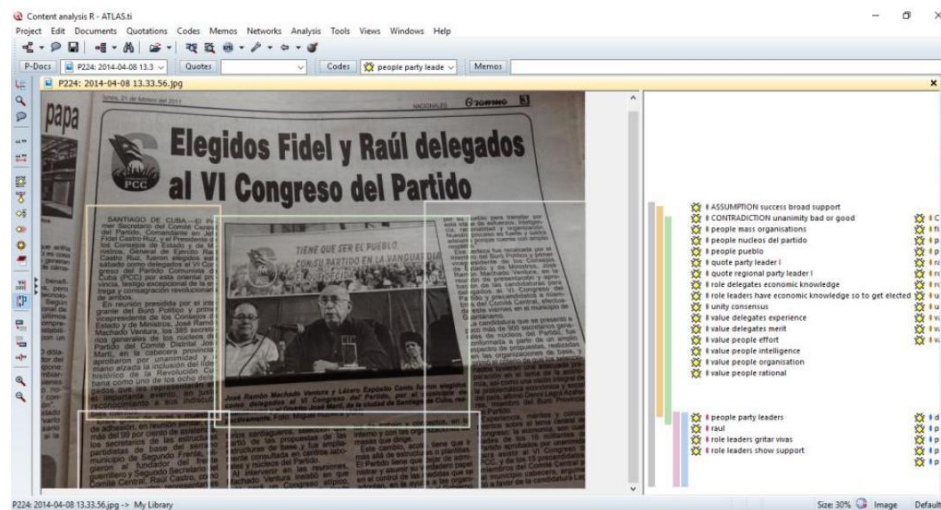
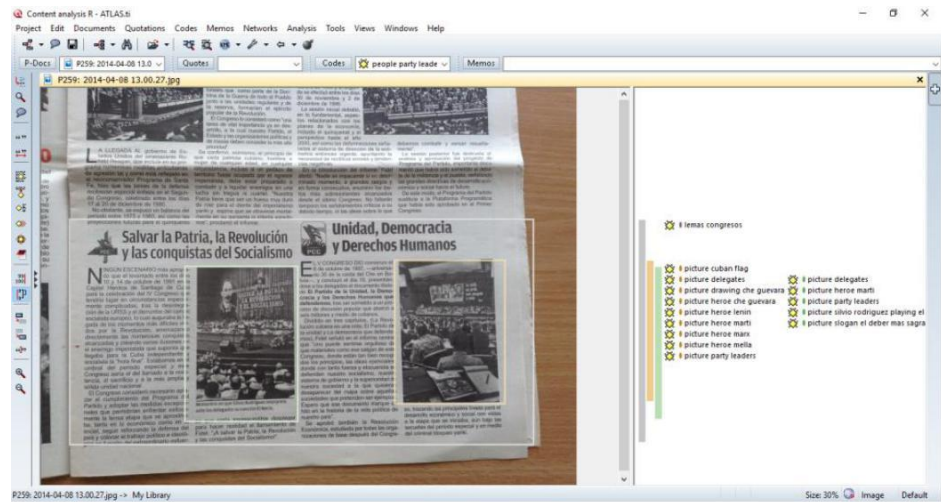
Codes: [Chain those convocados to discuss for all the people] [People pueblo - Family: PEOPLE] [Raul Presidir acto - Family: RAUL] [Role People Participate debate lineamientos] [Role People study lineamientos] [Unity All the People/masses/majority]

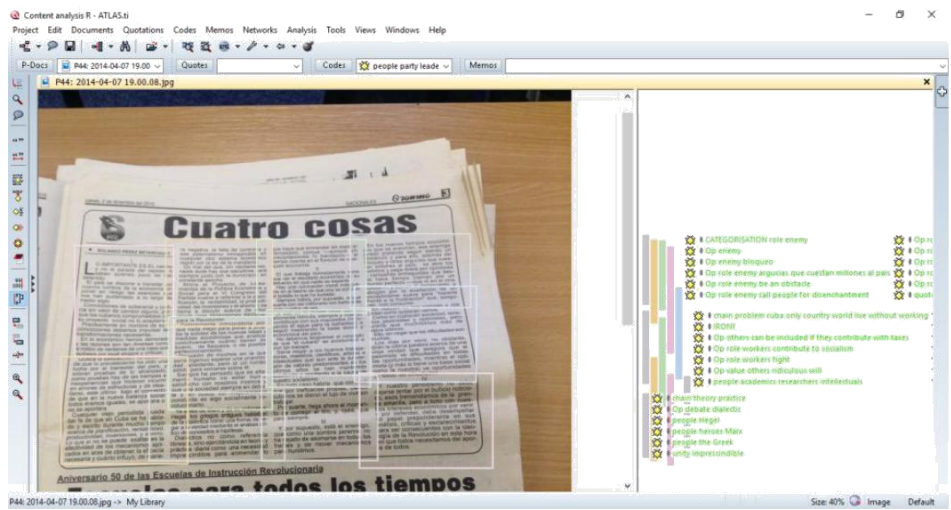
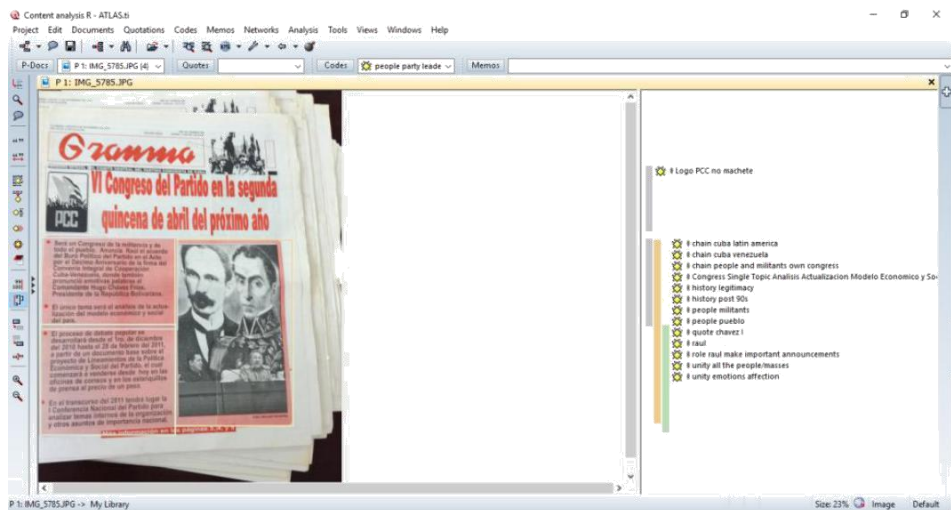
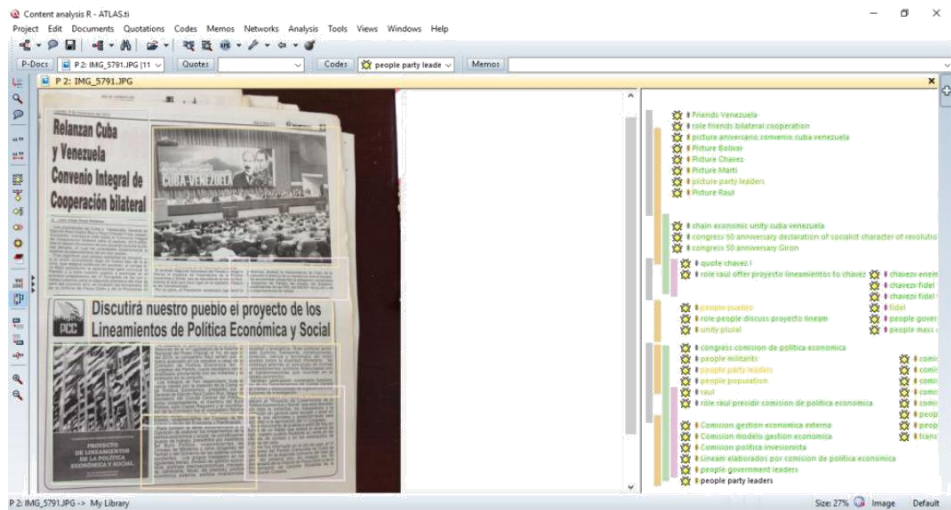
● Las orientaciones para desarrollar con la participación de todo el pueblo el estudio y debate de los temas contenidos en el Llamamiento al IV Congreso del Partido, fueron impartidas en una reunión presidida por el General de Ejército Raúl Castro, Segundo Secretario del Partido.

D. Frequency of Simple Codes in *Granma*, 2010-2012



E. News Stories and Codes in *Granma*, 2010-2012





F. Excerpts from 'The Enemy', *Granma*, 1990-1991

Report: 25 quotation(s) for 5 codes

Mode: quotation list names and references

Quotation-Filter: All

leadv enemy us

leadv enemy bloqueo

enemy david goliath

value enemy mercenarios

CATEGORISATION role enemy

P 6: IMG_5810.JPG - 6:7 [IMG_5810.JPG] (1703:2197)

Codes: [enemy david goliath] [enemy skillfull lawyers] [enemy United Fruit] [people farmers]

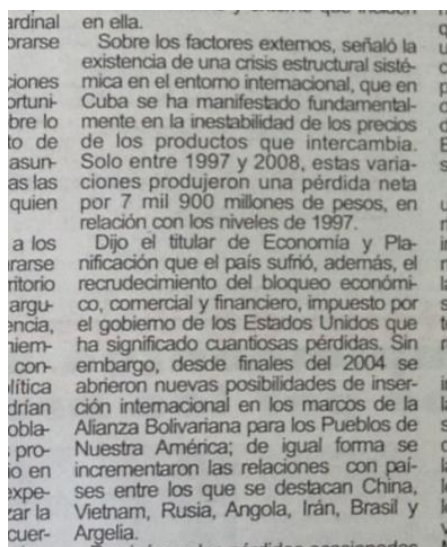


P21: IMG_5925.JPG - 21:8 [IMG_5925.JPG] (1059:1641)

Codes: [leadv enemy bloqueo] [leadv enemy US government] [leadv external factor international structural systemic crisis] [leadv external factor recrudescimiento bloqueo economico comercial financiero] [leadv friend ALBA] [leadv friends China Vietnam Russia Angola Iran Brazil Argelia] [percentages numbers]

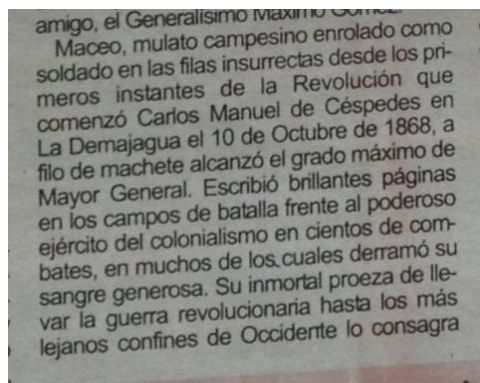
P44: 2014-04-07 19.00.08.jpg - 44:9 [2014-04-07 19.00.08.jpg] (600:861)

Codes: [CATEGORISATION role enemy] [Op enemy] [Op enemy bloqueo] [Op role enemy argucias que cuestan millones al pais] [Op role enemy be an obstacle] [Op role enemy call people for disenchantment] [Op role enemy call people for scepticism] [Op role enemy exaltar alleged frustration] [Op role enemy pay for campaigns entreguistas loss sovereignty] [Op role enemy pay for defamation] [Op role enemy take advantage of economic situation] [quote impersonal enemy D]



P47: 2014-04-08 11.35.07.jpg - 47:3 [2014-04-08 11.35.07.jpg] (1768:2235)

Codes: [chain heroes eternal] [chain Revolution independence and Revolution now] [enemy colonialism] [enemy david goliath] [history legitimacy] [history pre revolutionary] [HYPERBOLE] [people hero Céspedes] [PERSONIFICATION blood] [symbol mambises machete] [unity all country] [value heroes humble origins] [value heroes mulatto]



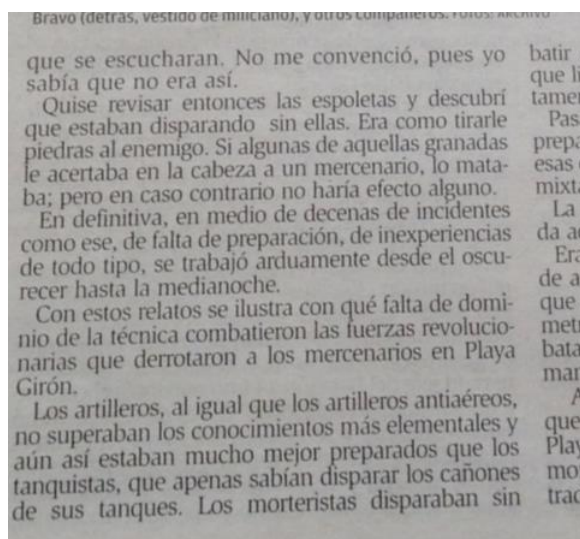
P242: 2014-04-08 12.56.36.jpg - 242:3 [2014-04-08 12.56.36.jpg] (330:1330)

Codes: [enemy david goliat] [value enemy mercenarios]



P248: 2014-04-08 12.58.12.jpg - 248:2 [2014-04-08 12.58.12.jpg] (1053:1711)

Codes: [enemy david goliat]



P248: 2014-04-08 12.58.12.jpg - 248:3 [2014-04-08 12.58.12.jpg] (813:1740)

Codes: [chain presence fidel communication with fidel guarantee of victory] [people compañeros]
[role combatientes follow rules] [value enemy mercenarios]



P250: 2014-04-08 12.58.21.jpg - 250:2 [2014-04-08 12.58.21.jpg] (998:1863)

Codes: [enemy david goliath] [value combatientes valentia]

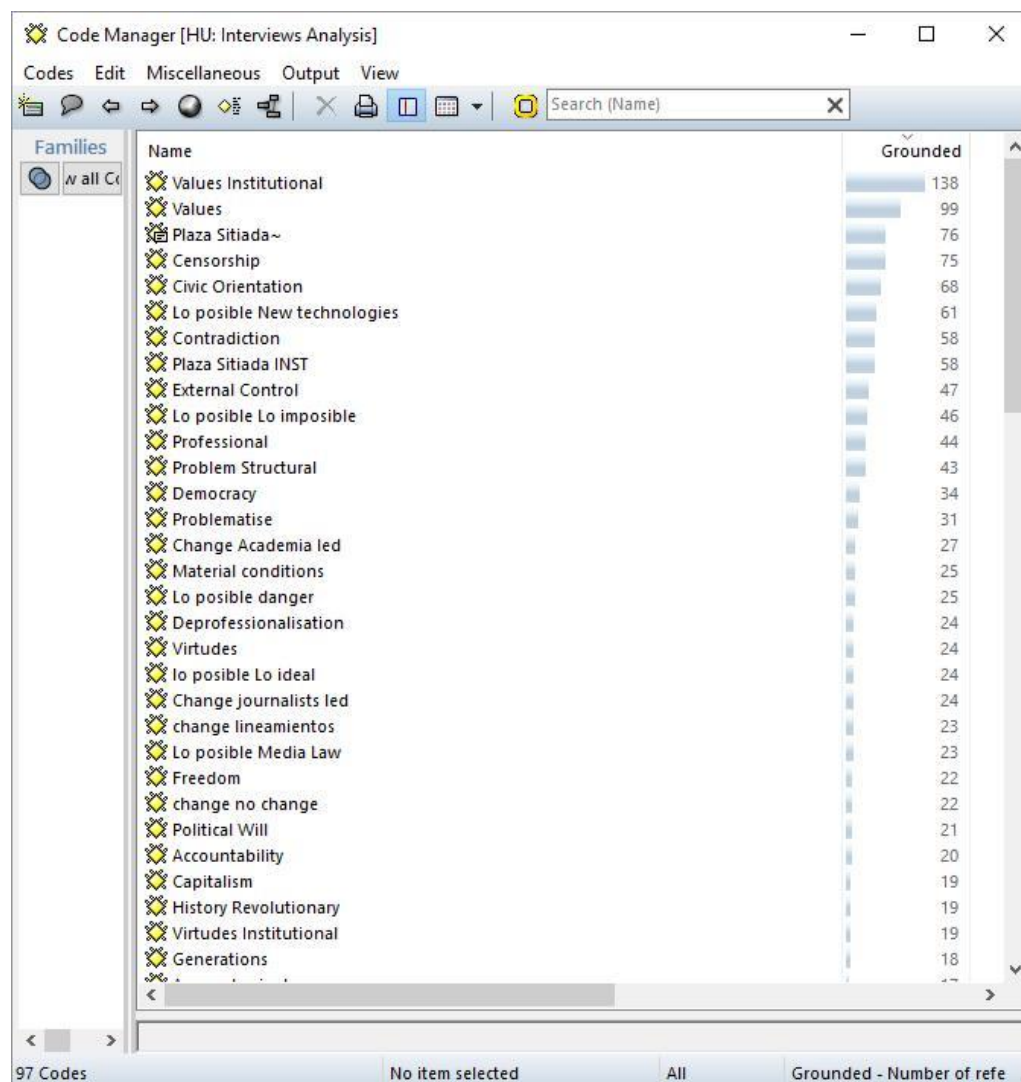


P252: 2014-04-08 12.58.26.jpg - 252:1 [2014-04-08 12.58.26.jpg] (235:1183)

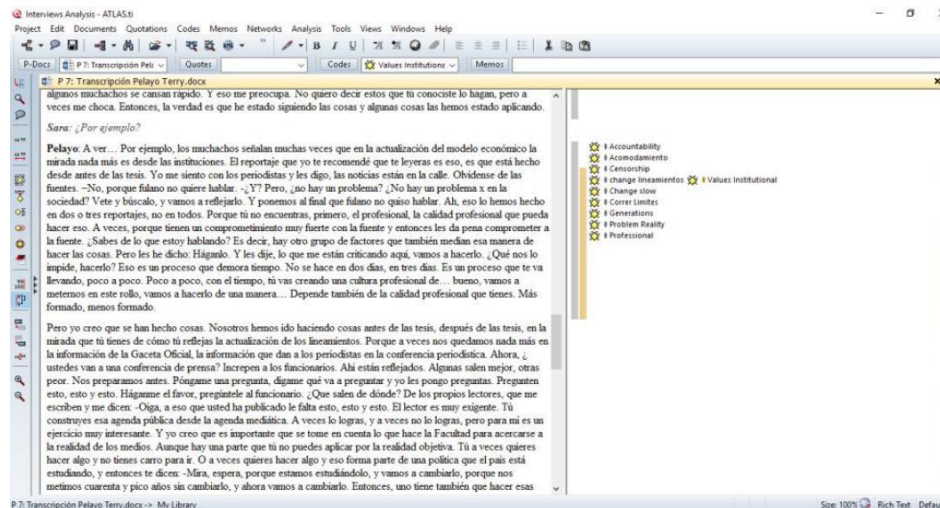
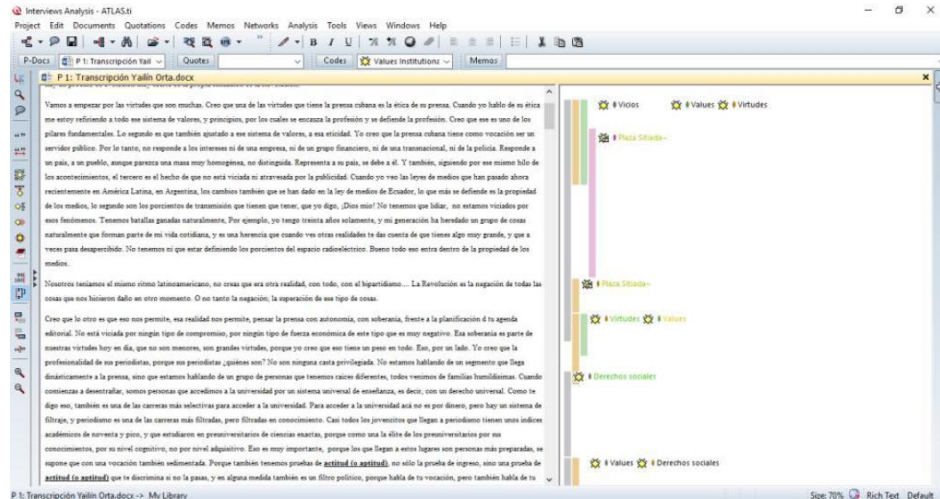
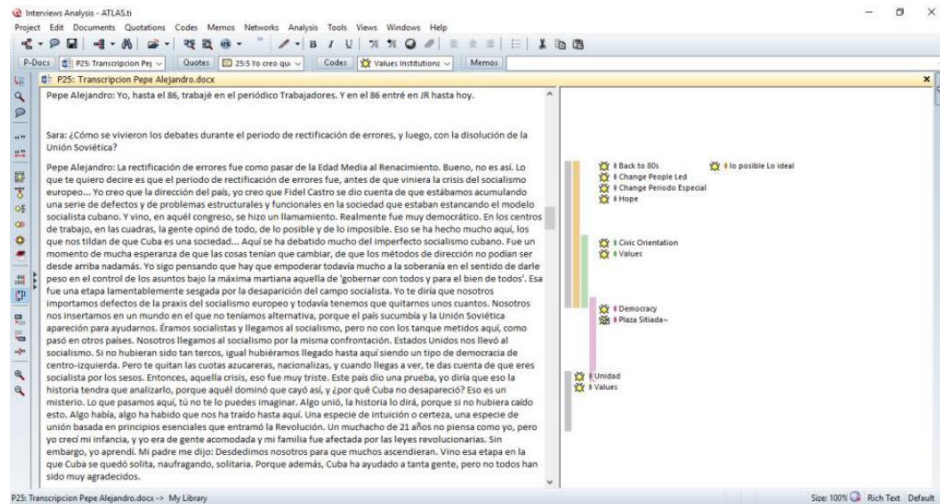
Codes: [enemy us] [people children] [people mujeres y hombres] [role enemy pay mercenarios
invade cuba] [value enemy mercenarios]

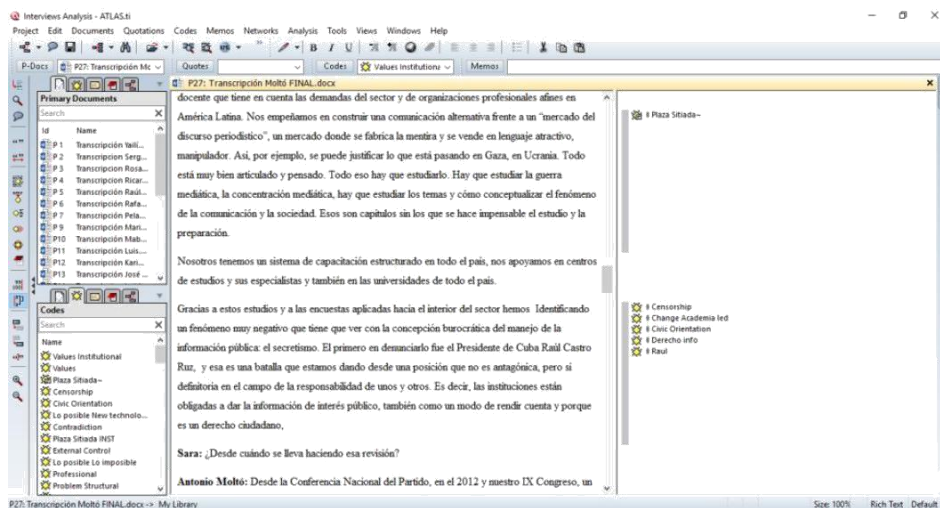
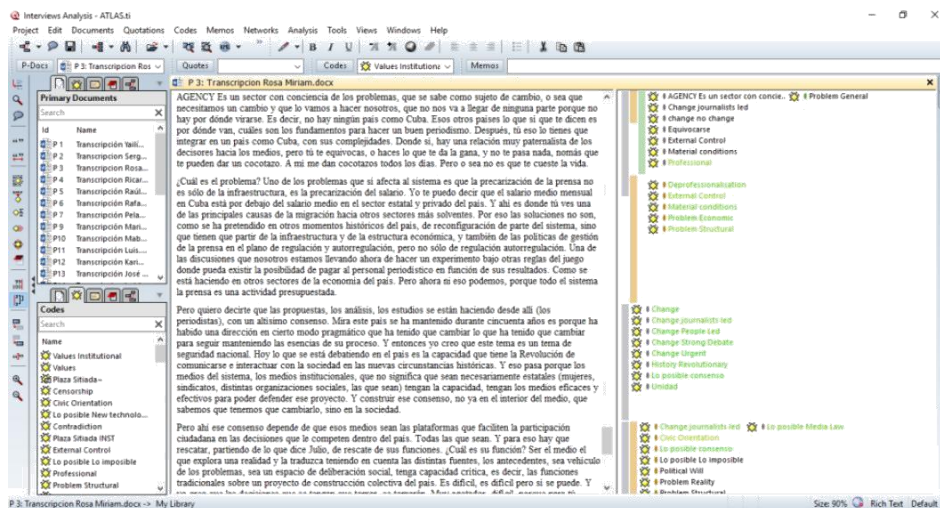
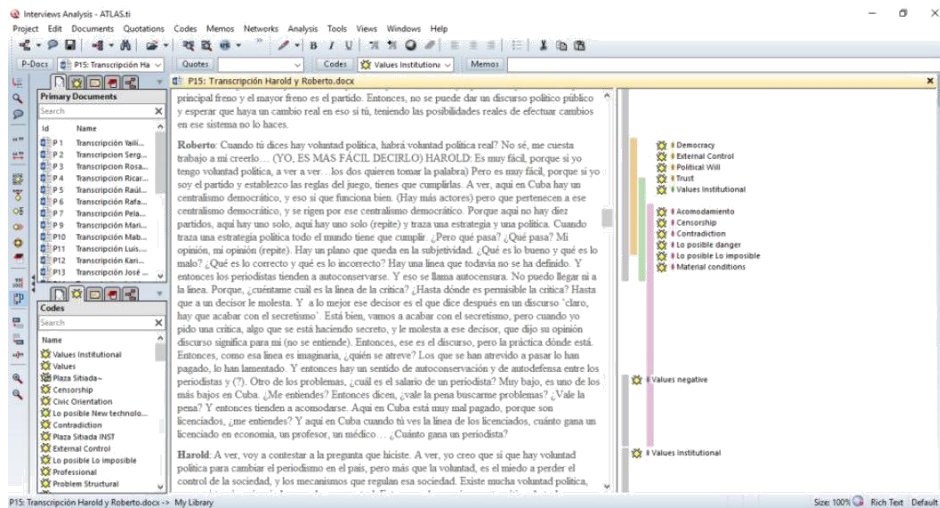


G. Frequency of Simple Codes in the Interviews



H. Excerpt from Interviews with Codes





Annex IV: List of Interviewees, Institutional Affiliation and Code⁸⁶

1. Editor at *Granma* (RA1)
2. High-Ranking Member of the *UPEC* (RD2)
3. High-Ranking Professor at *FCOM* (Facultad de Comunicación, *Universidad de La Habana*)
4. Editor at *Cubadebate* and professor at *FCOM* (RC4)
5. Editor at *Vistar Magazine* (RA5)
6. Opinion writer at *Juventud Rebelde* and former professor at *FCOM* (RD6)
7. Professor at *FCOM* (RA7)
8. Former professor at *FCOM* and PhD Candidate (RA8)
9. High-Ranking Professor at *FCOM* (RC9)
10. Editor at *Juventud Rebelde* (RD10)
11. Journalist at *On Cuba* and *El Toque* (RA11)
12. Editor at *Juventud Rebelde* (RB12)
13. Editor at *La Joven Cuba* (RB13)
14. Editor at *La Joven Cuba* (RA14)

⁸⁶ At the moment of the interview, those identified with the letter A were younger than 30 years-old; those identified with the letter B were between 30 and 39; the letter C identifies those aged between 40 and 55 years old, while those identified with the letter D were older than 55. The main idea was to identify recently-graduated journalists and academics in a group (A), those who have reached certain degree of seniority –and who sometimes occupy key editorial positions (B), those interviewees who graduated or develop their early experiences as journalists or academics throughout the 1980s, in a period of opening (C) and those who graduated previous to the 1980s (D). It is important to highlight that these categories simply indicate a range of age so the reader can better contextualize the seniority and experience of the interviewees. However, it is important to highlight that there is no clear-cut correlation between age/seniority and the interviewees' degree of criticism, or conservatism.

15. Editor at *La Chiringa de Cuba* (RB15)
16. Journalist at *OnCuba*, and former journalist at *Trabajadores* (RA17)
17. Editor at *Temas* (RD18)
18. Editor at *Periodismo de Barrio* and former professor at *FCOM* (RA20)
19. Journalist at *OnCuba* and and former journalist at *Trabajadores* (RA21)
20. Professor at *FCOM* and editor at *Juventud Rebelde* (RB22)
21. Professor at *FCOM* (RD23)
22. Editor at *Granma* (RC24)
23. Editor at *Granma* (RB25)
24. Editor at *Juventud Rebelde* (RC16)
25. Professor at *FCOM* and former journalist at *Granma* (RC19)

Annex V: Consent Forms

Department of Journalism Studies

University of Sheffield

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project/ Título del Proyecto de Investigación:

The historical construction of the Cuban people in times of national debate.
Strategies of discursive legitimation in *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde*/ La
construcción histórica del pueblo cubano en momentos de debate nacional.
Estrategias de legitimación discursiva en *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde*.

Name of Researcher/ Nombre del Investigador: Sara García Santamaría,
Department of Journalism Studies, The University of Sheffield

Please tick box/ Por favor, marque la casilla correspondiente:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information letter dated 10 July 2015 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project/ ☒

Confirmando que he leído y comprendido la hoja informativa con fecha del 10 de julio de 2015 explicando el proyecto de investigación y que he tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas sobre dicho proyecto.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. (If that was the case, please contact the researcher at sgarciasantamaria1@sheffield.ac.uk or garcias.sara@gmail.com)/ ☒
Comprendo que mi participación es voluntaria y que tengo libertad para retirarme del proyecto en cualquier momento sin dar ninguna

explicación y sin que ello implique ninguna consecuencia negativa. Además, en caso de que no desee responder alguna/s pregunta/s, tengo derecho a declinarlas. (Si necesitara ponerse en contacto con la investigadora principal, puede hacerlo en la siguiente dirección de correo electrónico: sgarciasantamaria1@sheffield.ac.uk or garcias.sara@gmail.com).

3. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in the doctoral thesis and related research projects/ Estoy de acuerdo en que se utilicen los datos recogidos durante la entrevista en la tesis doctoral y proyectos de investigación relacionados



4. I consent to being audio recorded/ Estoy de acuerdo en que se grabe la entrevista.



5. I understand that the audio record will be transferred to the researcher's hard drive and not stored on any other device/ Comprendo que la grabación de audio será transferida al disco duro de la investigadora y no será almacenada en ningún otro dispositivo.



6. I agree to take part in the above research project/ Estoy de acuerdo en participar en este proyecto de investigación.



7. Please, choose one or several options/ Por favor, elija una o varias opciones:

I consent to the use of attributable quotes and background information/ Consiento el uso de citas atribuibles y de información contextual.



I consent to the use of anonymised quotes and background



information/ Consiento el uso de citas anónimas y de información contextual.

I consent to the use of background information being used in the project, but not to the use of quotations/ Consiento el uso de información contextual, pero no de citas directas.

☐

Name hidden

Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

Firma

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant/ A ser firmado y fechado en presencia del participante

Copies/ Copias:

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and a copy of the transcribed interview. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record, which must be kept in a secure location/

Una vez haya sido firmado por todas las partes, el participante debe recibir una copia de la hoja de consentimiento firmada y fechada, la carta informativa y una copia de la transcripción de la entrevista. Una copia de la hoja de consentimiento firmada y fechada debe ser conservada en el registro principal del proyecto, que debe ser guardado en un lugar seguro.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project/ Título del Proyecto de Investigación:

The historical construction of the Cuban people in times of national debate. Strategies of discursive legitimation in *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde*/ La construcción histórica del pueblo cubano en momentos de debate nacional. Estrategias de legitimación discursiva en *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde*.

Name of Researcher/ Nombre del Investigador: Sara García Santamaría, Department of Journalism Studies, The University of Sheffield

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Confirmando que he leído y comprendido la hoja informativa con fecha del 10 de julio de 2015 explicando el proyecto de investigación y que he tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas sobre dicho proyecto.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. (If that was the case, please contact the researcher at sgarciasantamaria1@sheffield.ac.uk or garcias.sara@gmail.com)/
Comprendo que mi participación es voluntaria y que tengo libertad para retirarme del proyecto en cualquier momento sin dar ninguna



explicación y sin que ello implique ninguna consecuencia negativa. Además, en caso de que no desee responder alguna/s pregunta/s, tengo derecho a declinarlas. (Si necesitara ponerse en contacto con la investigadora principal, puede hacerlo en la siguiente dirección de correo electrónico: sgarciasantamaria1@sheffield.ac.uk or garcias.sara@gmail.com).

3. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in the doctoral thesis and related research projects/ Estoy de acuerdo en que se utilicen los datos recogidos durante la entrevista en la tesis doctoral y proyectos de investigación relacionados ☒
4. I consent to being audio recorded/ Estoy de acuerdo en que se grabe la entrevista. ☒
5. I understand that the audio record will be transferred to the researcher's hard drive and not stored on any other device/ Comprendo que la grabación de audio será transferida al disco duro de la investigadora y no será almacenada en ningún otro dispositivo. ☒
6. I agree to take part in the above research project/ Estoy de acuerdo en participar en este proyecto de investigación. ☒
7. Please, choose one or several options/ Por favor, elija una o varias opciones:
- I consent to the use of attributable quotes and background information/ Consiento el uso de citas atribuibles y de información contextual. ☒
- I consent to the use of anonymised quotes and background ☒

information/ Consiento el uso de citas anónimas y de información contextual.

I consent to the use of background information being used in the project, but not to the use of quotations/ Consiento el uso de información contextual, pero no de citas directas.

☐

Name hidden

21/7/15



Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

Firma

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant/ A ser firmado y fechado en presencia del participante

Copies/ Copias:

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and a copy of the transcribed interview. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record, which must be kept in a secure location/

Una vez haya sido firmado por todas las partes, el participante debe recibir una copia de la hoja de consentimiento firmada y fechada, la carta informativa y una copia de la transcripción de la entrevista. Una copia de la hoja de consentimiento firmada y fechada debe ser conservada en el registro principal del proyecto, que debe ser guardado en un lugar seguro.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project/ Título del Proyecto de Investigación:

The historical construction of the Cuban people in times of national debate.
Strategies of discursive legitimation in *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde*/ La
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Estrategias de legitimación discursiva en *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde*.

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Department of Journalism Studies, The University of Sheffield

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Confirmando que he leído y comprendido la hoja informativa con fecha del 10 de julio de 2015 explicando el proyecto de investigación y que he tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas sobre dicho proyecto.

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Comprendo que mi participación es voluntaria y que tengo libertad para retirarme del proyecto en cualquier momento sin dar ninguna

explicación y sin que ello implique ninguna consecuencia negativa. Además, en caso de que no desee responder alguna/s pregunta/s, tengo derecho a declinarlas. (Si necesitara ponerse en contacto con la investigadora principal, puede hacerlo en la siguiente dirección de correo electrónico: sgarciasantamaria1@sheffield.ac.uk or garcias.sara@gmail.com).

3. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in the doctoral thesis and related research projects/ Estoy de acuerdo en que se utilicen los datos recogidos durante la entrevista en la tesis doctoral y proyectos de investigación relacionados



4. I consent to being audio recorded/ Estoy de acuerdo en que se grabe la entrevista.



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I consent to the use of anonymised quotes and background



information/ Consiento el uso de citas anónimas y de información contextual.

I consent to the use of background information being used in the project, but not to the use of quotations/ Consiento el uso de información contextual, pero no de citas directas.



Name hidden

24/5/2012 

Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

Firma

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant/

A ser firmado y fechado en presencia del participante

Copies/ Copias:

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and a copy of the transcribed interview. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record, which must be kept in a secure location/

Una vez haya sido firmado por todas las partes, el participante debe recibir una copia de la hoja de consentimiento firmada y fechada, la carta informativa y una copia de la transcripción de la entrevista. Una copia de la hoja de consentimiento firmada y fechada debe ser conservada en el registro principal del proyecto, que debe ser guardado en un lugar seguro.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project/ Título del Proyecto de Investigación:

The historical construction of the Cuban people in times of national debate.
Strategies of discursive legitimization in *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde*/ La
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Estrategias de legitimación discursiva en *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde*.

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Department of Journalism Studies, The University of Sheffield

Please tick box/ Por favor, marque la casilla correspondiente:

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information letter dated 10 July 2015 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project/

☒

Confirmando que he leído y comprendido la hoja informativa con fecha del 10 de julio de 2015 explicando el proyecto de investigación y que he tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas sobre dicho proyecto.

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☒

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I consent to the use of attributable quotes and background information/ Consiento el uso de citas atribuibles y de información contextual.

☒

I consent to the use of anonymised quotes and background

☒

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I consent to the use of background information being used in the project, but not to the use of quotations/ Consiento el uso de información contextual, pero no de citas directas.



Name hidden

20/05/2016

Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

Firma

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant/

A ser firmado y fechado en presencia del participante

Copies/ Copias:

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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project/ Título del Proyecto de Investigación:

The historical construction of the Cuban people in times of national debate. Strategies of discursive legitimization in *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde*/ La construcción histórica del pueblo cubano en momentos de debate nacional. Estrategias de legitimación discursiva en *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde*.

Name of Researcher/ Nombre del Investigador: Sara García Santamaría,
Department of Journalism Studies, The University of Sheffield

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Name hidden

27/7/2015

GOBIH

Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

Firma

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☐

Name hidden

21/7/015



Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

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Name hidden

20. Jul. 2015

Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

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10/07/2015

Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

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3/07/15



Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

Firma

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Name of Researcher/ Nombre del Investigador: Sara García Santamaría, Department of Journalism Studies, The University of Sheffield

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*Después
varia.*

Name hidden

23-7-2016

JRM

Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

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I consent to the use of anonymised quotes and background



information/ Consiento el uso de citas anónimas y de información contextual.

I consent to the use of background information being used in the project, but not to the use of quotations/ Consiento el uso de información contextual, pero no de citas directas.

☐

Name hidden

15/5/10/2015



Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

Firma

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant/ A ser firmado y fechado en presencia del participante

Copies/ Copias:

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Title of Research Project/ Título del Proyecto de Investigación:

The historical construction of the Cuban people in times of national debate.
Strategies of discursive legitimation in *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde*/ La
construcción histórica del pueblo cubano en momentos de debate nacional.
Estrategias de legitimación discursiva en *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde*.

Name of Researcher/ Nombre del Investigador: Sara García Santamaría,
Department of Journalism Studies, The University of Sheffield

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and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project/



Confirmo que he leído y comprendido la hoja informativa con fecha del
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Name hidden

13/7/15



Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

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Name hidden

8/12/2015



Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

Firma

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☐

Name hidden

31-3-2016

[Signature]

Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

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☐

Name hidden

20/7/2015



Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

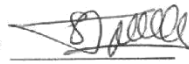
Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Sara García Santamaría

20/07/2015



Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

Firma

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Name of Researcher/ Nombre del Investigador: Sara García Santamaría,
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Name hidden

26/7/2015



Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

Firma

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23/07/15



Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

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explicación y sin que ello implique ninguna consecuencia negativa. Además, en caso de que no desee responder alguna/s pregunta/s, tengo derecho a declinarlas. (Si necesitara ponerse en contacto con la investigadora principal, puede hacerlo en la siguiente dirección de correo electrónico: sgarciasantamaria1@sheffield.ac.uk or garcias.sara@gmail.com).

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I consent to the use of anonymised quotes and background ☐

information/ Consiento el uso de citas anónimas y de información contextual.

I consent to the use of background information being used in the project, but not to the use of quotations/ Consiento el uso de información contextual, pero no de citas directas.

☐

Name hidden

Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

SARA GARCIA
SANTA MARIA

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

Firma

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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project/ Título del Proyecto de Investigación:

The historical construction of the Cuban people in times of national debate. Strategies of discursive legitimization in *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde*/ La construcción histórica del pueblo cubano en momentos de debate nacional. Estrategias de legitimación discursiva en *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde*.

Name of Researcher/ Nombre del Investigador: Sara García Santamaría,
Department of Journalism Studies, The University of Sheffield

Please tick box/ Por favor, marque la casilla correspondiente:

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- Confirmo que he leído y comprendido la hoja informativa con fecha del 10 de julio de 2015 explicando el proyecto de investigación y que he tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas sobre dicho proyecto.
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☐

Name hidden

24/07/2015



Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

Firma

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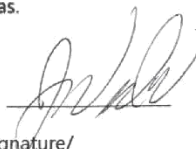
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24-7-15



Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

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Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

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Name hidden

14/7/2015



Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

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Name of Researcher/ Nombre del Investigador: Sara García Santamaría, Department of Journalism Studies, The University of Sheffield

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Name hidden

14/julio/2015



Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

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The historical construction of the Cuban people in times of national debate.
Strategies of discursive legitimization in *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde*/ La
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Name of Researcher/ Nombre del Investigador: Sara García Santamaría,
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☒

PA/13

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PA/13

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Name hidden

Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

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Participant Consent Form

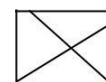
Title of Research Project/ Título del Proyecto de Investigación:

The historical construction of 'the Cuban people' in times of national debate. Strategies of discursive legitimization in *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde*/ La construcción histórica del pueblo cubano en momentos de debate nacional. Estrategias de legitimación discursiva en *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde*.

Name of Researcher/ Nombre del Investigador: Sara García Santamaría, Department of Journalism Studies, The University of Sheffield

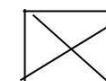
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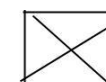
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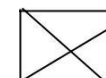


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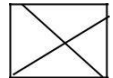
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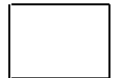
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26 de Enero de 2017

Name of Participant/

Date/ Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha Firma

A moi

Sara, hace varios días te envié mi consentimiento.
Hoy lo reitero.

Éxitos en tu tesis.

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant/

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Copies/ Copias:

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and a copy of the transcribed interview. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record, which must be kept in a secure location/

Una vez haya sido firmado por todas las partes, el participante debe recibir una copia de la hoja de consentimiento firmada y fechada, la carta informativa y una copia de la transcripción de la entrevista. Una copia de la hoja de consentimiento firmada y fechada debe ser conservada en el registro principal del proyecto, que debe ser guardado en un lugar seguro.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project/ Título del Proyecto de Investigación:

The historical construction of the Cuban people in times of national debate. Strategies of discursive legitimization in *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde*/ La construcción histórica del pueblo cubano en momentos de debate nacional. Estrategias de legitimación discursiva en *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde*.

Name of Researcher/ Nombre del Investigador: Sara García Santamaría,
Department of Journalism Studies, The University of Sheffield

Please tick box/ Por favor, marque la casilla correspondiente:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information letter dated 10 July 2015 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project/ ☒

Confirmando que he leído y comprendido la hoja informativa con fecha del 10 de julio de 2015 explicando el proyecto de investigación y que he tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas sobre dicho proyecto.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. (If that was the case, please contact the researcher at sgarciasantamaria1@sheffield.ac.uk or garcias.sara@gmail.com)/ ☒

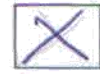
Comprendo que mi participación es voluntaria y que tengo libertad para retirarme del proyecto en cualquier momento sin dar ninguna

explicación y sin que ello implique ninguna consecuencia negativa. Además, en caso de que no desee responder alguna/s pregunta/s, tengo derecho a declinarlas. (Si necesitara ponerse en contacto con la investigadora principal, puede hacerlo en la siguiente dirección de correo electrónico: sgarciasantamaria1@sheffield.ac.uk or garcias.sara@gmail.com).

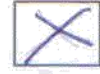
3. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in the doctoral thesis and related research projects/ Estoy de acuerdo en que se utilicen los datos recogidos durante la entrevista en la tesis doctoral y proyectos de investigación relacionados



4. I consent to being audio recorded/ Estoy de acuerdo en que se grabe la entrevista.



5. I understand that the audio record will be transferred to the researcher's hard drive and not stored on any other device/ Comprendo que la grabación de audio será transferida al disco duro de la investigadora y no será almacenada en ningún otro dispositivo.



6. I agree to take part in the above research project/ Estoy de acuerdo en participar en este proyecto de investigación.



7. Please, choose one or several options/ Por favor, elija una o varias opciones:

I consent to the use of attributable quotes and background information/ Consiento el uso de citas atribuibles y de información contextual.



I consent to the use of anonymised quotes and background



information/ Consiento el uso de citas anónimas y de información contextual.

I consent to the use of background information being used in the project, but not to the use of quotations/ Consiento el uso de información contextual, pero no de citas directas.



Name hidden

10/07/2015

[Handwritten signature]



Name of Participant/

Date/

Signature/

Nombre del Participante

Fecha

Firma

Lead Researcher/

Date/

Signature/

Investigador principal

Fecha

Firma

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant/ A ser firmado y fechado en presencia del participante

Copies/ Copias:

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and a copy of the transcribed interview. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record, which must be kept in a secure location/

Una vez haya sido firmado por todas las partes, el participante debe recibir una copia de la hoja de consentimiento firmada y fechada, la carta informativa y una copia de la transcripción de la entrevista. Una copia de la hoja de consentimiento firmada y fechada debe ser conservada en el registro principal del proyecto, que debe ser guardado en un lugar seguro.

Annex VI: Informative Letter to Respondents

Hoja Informativa

1. Título del proyecto

La construcción histórica del pueblo cubano en momentos de debate nacional. Estrategias de legitimación discursiva en *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde*.⁸⁷

2. Invitación

Me gustaría invitarle a participar en un proyecto de investigación. Antes de confirmar su participación, es importante que comprenda la naturaleza del proyecto y sus implicaciones. Por favor, lea atentamente la información que se presenta a continuación, y pida la opinión de terceras personas si lo considera necesario. No dude en preguntar a la investigadora si tiene alguna duda, o si desea más información al respecto. Tómese el tiempo necesario para decidir si quiere formar parte del proyecto. Muchas gracias.

3. Objetivo del proyecto

Este proyecto de investigación forma parte de mi tesis doctoral en el departamento de Periodismo de la Universidad de Sheffield, Reino Unido. La tesis explora la construcción histórica del pueblo cubano en los periódicos *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde*, partiendo de la teoría del discurso de Ernesto Laclau. La tesis se centra en dos periodos de cambio y de debate: el llamamiento previo al IV Congreso del Partido, y el llamamiento previo al VI Congreso del Partido. El proyecto trata de comprender cómo la prensa nacional representa y construye el papel del pueblo cubano en momentos de cambio, en los que es necesario renovar el consenso revolucionario. Para ello, se utiliza una triangulación de métodos de análisis: un análisis de contenido de noticias durante un periodo aproximado de un año y medio en cada periodo, un análisis de discurso de las noticias directamente relacionadas con los llamamientos y los congresos, y un análisis de contexto a través de entrevistas con académicos, periodistas y blogueros cubanos. Los datos derivados de las entrevistas se podrán utilizar para la tesis doctoral, en publicaciones académicas ligadas a este proyecto, y en conferencias académicas. En ningún caso se utilizarán en publicaciones o conferencias no académicas.

4. Criterio de selección de participantes

La primera fase de selección de participantes siguió un muestreo teórico, y una vez conducidas las primeras entrevistas se procedió a un muestreo bola de nieve. Para poder comprender el contexto de producción periodística en ambos momentos históricos, la investigadora seleccionó entrevistados de un amplio rango de edad, haciendo hincapié en aquellos entrevistados que han desarrollado su carrera profesional entre ambos periodos. En un primer momento, se seleccionaron mayoritariamente profesores de comunicación y periodistas, ya que ambas categorías se superponen con frecuencia en el contexto cubano, y representan varios grados de pertenencia a la profesión periodística. Ya que el grado de saturación teórica se alcanzó en una etapa temprana, se decidió incluir una tercera categoría, la de blogueros críticos con los medios tradicionales. Esta última

⁸⁷ El título de este proyecto puede estar sujeto a cambios hasta la entrega de la copia final de la tesis.

categoría no sólo se sobrepone con frecuencia con la de académicos y periodistas, sino que también permite extender el rango de relación de los participantes con el periodismo. Finalmente, todos los entrevistados se consideran a sí mismos partidarios de la Revolución.

5. Condiciones de participación

Su participación en este proyecto de investigación debe ser decidida con total libertad. Si decide participar, la investigadora le entregará una copia de esta hoja informativa para que la guarde, junto con una hoja de consentimiento que deberá firmar. El consentimiento escrito no implica que usted esté obligado a participar en el proyecto. Usted puede solicitar que la investigadora borre parcial o totalmente el contenido de la entrevista, y puede cancelar su participación en cualquier momento previo a la compleción de la tesis, sin tener que dar ninguna explicación, y sin que esto implique ninguna consecuencia negativa.

Su participación en este proyecto debe ser voluntaria y no remunerada. La investigadora le invitará a llevar a cabo una entrevista semiestructurada, de una duración aproximada de una hora, idealmente en persona. La investigadora le pedirá consentimiento oral para hacer una grabación de voz. Una vez la entrevista haya sido grabada y transcrita, la investigadora le entregará una copia de la transcripción y una hoja de consentimiento escrito para que usted pueda decidir si quiere continuar formando parte del proyecto. Cualquier posible participación posterior es completamente voluntaria, y usted tiene total libertad para decidir si desea o no participar, sin que esto afecte su intervención inicial.

6. Rol del participante

El rol del participante es responder las preguntas de la investigadora durante la entrevista y, en caso de que así lo decida, firmar la hoja de consentimiento. Ya que se trata de una entrevista semiestructurada, puede que surjan preguntas no previstas inicialmente, o que ésta adquiera cierto matiz conversacional. Su participación en el proyecto no implica ningún otro requerimiento por su parte.

7. Grabación de las entrevistas

La investigadora le pedirá consentimiento oral para realizar una grabación de voz al inicio de la entrevista. La grabación será almacenada digitalmente y los participantes serán identificados con un código numérico. La investigadora solamente utilizará las citas e información proporcionadas durante la entrevista, y en ningún caso utilizará datos que hayan surgido en conversaciones anteriores o posteriores sin previo consentimiento del entrevistado. La investigadora entregará una copia de la transcripción a los participantes, junto con una hoja de consentimiento, para que puedan decidir si desean continuar formando parte del proyecto de investigación.

8. Posibles desventajas de su participación

No se identifica *a priori* ninguna posible desventaja o riesgo de su participación en el proyecto. No obstante, si usted piensa que su participación puede implicar cualquier tipo de desventaja o riesgo, por favor, comuníquesele a la investigadora para que esta información pueda ser tomada en consideración.

9. Posibles ventajas de su participación

No se identifica *a priori* ninguna ventaja directa derivada de su participación en el proyecto, más allá de su contribución a expandir el conocimiento sobre el tema a estudiar. En cualquier caso, se espera que su participación pueda contribuir a comprender el contexto político, económico, social y

organizacional en el que trabajan los periodistas cubanos, y a visibilizar tanto sus puntos de vista como sus aspiraciones profesionales.

10. En caso de que algo no funcione como esperado

En caso de no completarse con éxito la tesis doctoral, la investigadora pedirá permiso a los entrevistados para poder utilizar los datos en proyectos posteriores. En caso de que usted tenga cualquier queja sobre la forma en que se ha llevado a cabo la entrevista, o tratado la entrevista o su información personal, usted debe transmitir su queja directamente a la investigadora. En caso de que la investigadora no le ofrezca una respuesta satisfactoria, usted puede llevar la queja a su supervisor principal, Jairo Lugo-Ocando (*University of Leeds*, j.lugo-ocando@leeds.ac.uk).

11. Confidencialidad

La investigadora entregará a los entrevistados una hoja de consentimiento para que decidan el grado de anonimato con el que desean ser identificados. En cualquier caso, la investigadora se compromete a mantener el nombre y la edad exacta de los entrevistados anónimos. Los entrevistados que así lo autoricen serán identificados en la tesis y en cualquier publicación derivada de ésta por un código numérico, cargo, y rango de edad en el momento de la entrevista.

12. Tipo de información requerida

Los entrevistados deberán proporcionar su nombre completo, cargo, afiliación laboral y edad en el momento de realizar la entrevista. Como se ha indicado en la sección anterior, los entrevistados que así lo autoricen serán identificados por un código numérico, cargo, y rango de edad en el momento de la entrevista.

13. Afiliación académica y fondos

La investigadora es candidata a doctora en el Departamento de Periodismo de la *Universidad de Sheffield*, Reino Unido. La investigadora ha obtenido fondos para su doctorado de dos organismos: La Fundación *La Caixa* y la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales de la *Universidad de Sheffield*. Además, la investigadora ha obtenido fondos de la *David Nicholls Foundation*, Universidad de Oxford, para realizar su trabajo de campo en Cuba.

Annex VII: Transcription of Interviews

RA1

Editor at *Granma*

Havana, 30 July 2014

Sara: ¿Cuáles son a su juicio las principales virtudes y problemas de la prensa cubana actual?

RA1: Yo creo que ahora mismo es más fácil acordarse de los defectos que de las virtudes, así que vamos a empezar por los defectos. El principal defecto para mí es la complejización de la realidad. Es decir, que el hecho de apoyar y tener como una de las misiones proteger a la Revolución como proceso social. El hecho de la visión de los medios de prensa únicamente como un instrumento ha evitado que se logre una complejización de la realidad, ha logrado que se vea todo en blanco y negro, en bueno y malo. Entonces, a pesar de los llamados de las autoridades, de tener un periodismo que abarque más los problemas de la realidad, un periodismo que no sea monocromático como lo es en el papel; que no lo sea en el pensamiento, ha fracasado una y otra vez el modelo de prensa nuestro en lograr eso. Y creo que eso no es un defecto de los periodistas. Es un defecto del modelo de prensa, del modelo de prensa que hemos escogido, que está demasiado atado a los compromisos oficiales y que por esas ataduras es incapaz de cumplir con su misión fundamental, que es informar sobre toda la variedad de problemas que tiene la población, y de toda la variedad de enfoques que tiene sobre la realidad.

Yo, de alguna manera, tendría que recuperar los apuntes. Creo que la prensa cubana tiene dos funciones fundamentales: una de ellas es proteger a la Revolución, y la segunda es informar a las personas de lo que necesitan. En mi opinión personal y viéndolo desde un punto de vista teórico, las dos funciones no son incompatibles: usted puede proteger la Revolución y al mismo tiempo que informa.

No deben, pero en la práctica se han dado casos en los que son incompatibles las dos misiones, o que la visión del modelo de prensa que nosotros hemos tenido ha convertido esos dos elementos en incompatibles, lo cual es un defecto sistémico y es ahí donde yo señalaría el principal problema.

Para ponerte un ejemplo concreto que quizás ilustre un poco esto que estoy diciendo. [Bromeando: Esto pasa todos los días pero, ¿qué ejemplo te puedo poner que no sea muy comprometedor para mí y para Raquel?]. Por ejemplo, la Revolución cubana, Cuba es un país del tercer mundo, un país en desarrollo, un país que necesita comerciar con todos los países. Y por tanto, tiene relaciones comerciales con países que tienen una política exterior e interna que es totalmente distinta a la nuestra, y que de hecho no se corresponde con los valores que defendemos en el mundo. Sin embargo, como el todo el resto del mundo, nosotros tenemos que comerciar con esas personas y hacer negocios. Eso sucede en el mundo entero. Sin embargo, son tantos los compromisos de la prensa con el gobierno físicamente (Cancillería, Consejo de Estado), que entonces la prensa no puede tener una visión más abarcadora, más profunda de esos países con los que queremos mejorar las relaciones porque se entiende que empeoraría... Por ejemplo, que el diario oficial del PCC en Cuba haga un análisis crítico sobre el papel de las mujeres en Arabia Saudita se podía interpretar

como que es la visión oficial del gobierno al respecto y evitaría por ejemplo, un negocio que se está haciendo con Arabia Saudita para mejorar los hospitales. Entonces, increíblemente, ahí es donde se da la contradicción sistémica. Ideológicamente, políticamente, para la Revolución es necesario que el pueblo entienda los problemas, las contradicciones que hay en Arabia Saudita con las mujeres. Eso es necesario y útil para la ideología, para la construcción ideológica de las personas. Sin embargo, no es útil para la política exterior, para la cancillería. Entonces, la prensa como sistema no puede cumplir las dos funciones al mismo tiempo. No afectar las relaciones económicas cubanas y abordar con profundidad e inteligencia un tema como el de las mujeres en Arabia Saudita.

Te podría hacer una larga lista de cómo este ejemplo se repite una y otra vez en temas internacionales y nacionales. Pero al final, todo apunta a que el sistema no es capaz de hacer las dos cosas al mismo tiempo tampoco en las noticias nacionales. Porque por ejemplo, proteger a la Revolución para un periodista debe ser poder siempre informar de lo mal que está avanzando la economía en un sector. Eso es una cosa elemental en el análisis. Sin embargo, muchas veces el sistema de prensa asume que un análisis o una crítica muy fuerte en un tema pueden afectar a la Revolución. Y entonces, son una serie de contradicciones que nunca el sistema de la prensa, ni su sistema de dirección, han logrado resolver.

Muchas veces se ha dirigido el foco de atención hacia los periodistas por su falta de profesionalidad que existe. Falta de profesionalidad, de interés, de motivación (por otro tipo de limitaciones materiales que también están presentes en la prensa). Pero yo creo que un análisis profundo de todo este tipo de temas... son más bien síntomas de una enfermedad que ha sido diagnosticada por un excelente profesor nuestro que ya murió, que es el decano Julio García Luis, y yo creo que ahí está toda la evolución de cómo se construyó nuestro sistema de prensa, de cómo copiamos de cierta manera el modelo de prensa soviético.

Ahora me voy a lo que considero más difícil, que son las virtudes. La veracidad [mostrando acuerdo]. La visión oficialista de la prensa tiene un defecto por un lado, y una virtud por otro. Las personas, lo que sale en el periódico lo asumen como una verdad porque hay una tradición de no mentir, no se manipula. Se puede llegar a manipular por omisión, pero no recuerdo un ejemplo ahora mismo donde se haya dicho una mentira intencionadamente (tú puedes defender una cosa y que después se demuestre con el tiempo, con la historia, que no era cierto). Pero intencionadamente, nunca se ha dicho una mentira dentro de la prensa cubana, y eso ha creado una conciencia en la gente. Aunque a veces las medidas, por ejemplo, la 'Actualización del Modelo Económico', son complejas, y los políticos también fallan... Eso es una cosa que también podría señalar, que hay cosas de las crisis que se le atañen a la prensa que son también crisis del sistema político. No son crisis del modelo de prensa. Por ejemplo, la ausencia de un debate social sobre las medidas de 'Actualización' más profundo que el que tenemos actualmente, yo creo que no es responsabilidad de la prensa. Es que los políticos no salen a debatir.

Es muy difícil que tú le reclames únicamente a la prensa que ser el actor de un debate de 'Actualización' que no conduce la prensa. Porque las medidas que se toman, las toman los políticos, no las toman los directivos de la prensa. Y el papel de la prensa es colaborar, informar, o sea, desde el sistema político, llevarlo a la agenda pública. Esa es la misión de la prensa, no construir la agenda política. No es construir agenda política, eso les toca a los políticos. Y de hecho pasa. Aunque es un actor o un instrumento de la agenda política, no la construye él solo. Y aquí muchas veces se intenta que eso sea lo que pase, que la prensa sea la que asuma el rol de construir la agenda política por una crisis que viene del sistema político, que no está en la prensa.

Sara: Pero sí que hubo mucho debate en diciembre de 2010 y en enero de 2011, antes del VI Congreso del Partido. Quizás empezó antes, pero en esa época se empezó a hacer más visible, ¿verdad?

RA1: Lo otro es que para hacer un análisis serio no solamente centrarnos en los medios de información, sino también en la comunicación, es que en Cuba hay muchas estructuras de comunicación paralelas a la prensa. Hay cosas que son paralelas a la comunicación (los colectivos de trabajo, que tienen su sistema de información, el tema de los CDR). El debate de los lineamientos no se dio en la esfera pública de los medios de comunicación, sino que se dio en reuniones o asambleas, tres millones creo, cuatro millones de sugerencias. Era un número altísimo del debate popular. Lo que sucede, en mi opinión personal, es que eso atomiza el debate, y en ese caso en específico creo que era necesario sacar el debate del plano particular y llevarlo a un análisis más de los medios de comunicación en global.

Nosotros de ese debate, por ejemplo, nunca supimos el resumen de los planteamientos. Nosotros no éramos periodistas en ese momento. Lo que no supimos, por ejemplo, es cuáles fue el resultado de ese debate. Es decir, de esos tres millones, cuántos pidieron que se quitara tal cosa, cuántos pidieron que se cambiara ese tema en específico. Por ejemplo, nunca se dijo cuáles fueron los temas más abordados. Ese fue un debate grande, pero nunca se pormenorizó, y esos eran elementos necesarios en mi opinión personal, para poder abordarlos de una manera general. Porque si tú te pones a pensar, de esos tres millones de opiniones, de esos tres millones de sugerencias, dos millones están destinadas, por ejemplo, a la venta de carros, que en ese momento estaba prohibida. ¿Por qué se mantenía la prohibición? Esa era una forma también de plebiscito sobre muchos de los temas de la sociedad, y eso realmente se omitió.

Sí hubo una participación, pero yo creo que eso un poco se truncó. Aunque fueron elementos que se tomaron muy en cuenta en la redacción final de los lineamientos porque hubo cambios, pero igual, cambios hechos por la esfera política. No se sacó de la esfera de lo particular. Por ejemplo, cuando yo voy a una asamblea, yo llevo mis problemas particulares, y el debate puede ser muy profundo sobre mis problemas particulares. Pero el debate sobre los problemas generales, que son los que sería la sumatoria de todas las asambleas, que son los que debía haber abordado en extenso la prensa como un debate social general, te digo, yo no vi un debate profundo. No éramos periodistas, no trabajábamos aquí, pero estábamos estudiando periodismo y lo seguíamos.

Sara: Este año hubo estudiantes que en sus tesis de diploma estudiaron el tema y vinieron a *Granma* a presentar los resultados.

RA1: Ellos lo que hicieron fue lo de la ‘Actualización del Modelo Económico’, cómo se está dando cobertura a los cambios. Mira, te doy ejemplos concretos porque te puede parecer extraño esto, porque tú estás acostumbrada igual a otro modelo de prensa. Pero hay medidas dentro de la ‘Actualización del Modelo Económico’ que nunca han sido anunciadas por un político, simplemente de esas medidas sólo hay un referente, que es el periódico *Granma*. Ejemplo, lo de los carros salió publicado en el periódico *Granma* y después en la Gaceta Oficial. Nunca, nunca públicamente, nunca un político se ha referido en la esfera pública al tema de los carros, ni ha explicado, ni ha dado los argumentos. Nadie, nunca. Ningún político. Ni el Presidente, ni el Vicepresidente, ni el Ministro de Economía, No ha pasado que ningún político haya salido a la esfera pública y haya dicho: -Tomamos esta decisión por este motivo y con estos argumentos. Eso nunca ha pasado.

Sara: Yo hubiera pensado que el político ha hablado con los periodistas de *Granma*, que es el órgano oficial del Partido, y ha sido el periodista el que ha diseminado su opinión en la prensa aunque no haya aparecido él públicamente...

RA1: Entonces tú entiendes mejor el sistema de prensa que yo, porque a mí no me parece lógico. Más o menos, esa es la lógica. Lo que a mí me parece una lógica perversa. Porque la responsabilidad del político que toma una medida es aceptar y asumir la responsabilidad de lo que está tomando.

Yo te doy mi opinión personal, en este proceso de ‘Actualización del Modelo Económico’ también se dio un proceso que influyó no solo en la comunicación, sino en la política, en todos los aspectos, que es el abandono de Fidel de la esfera pública con la fuerza que tenía antes, y la sustitución de esa impronta que tenía Fidel comunicativa, política, por la institucionalización paulatina del país. Y eso ha creado grandes vacíos porque Fidel era un mandatario que explicaba cada una de las medidas que tomaba con argumentos, con por qué en grandes discursos, es un ejemplo de comunicación política de libro de texto. Entonces, eso nadie lo puede hacerlo igual que lo hacía él. Pero los mecanismos institucionales para lograr suplir ese vacío o no existen, o han sido muy ineficaces.

Sara: Repite la idea para asegurarse de que lo ha entendido bien.

RA1: Vacío político, porque realmente es un vacío político. Es un vacío de la esfera política, en el concepto de político convencer a las personas. En el concepto más Gramsciano de que política es el acto de convencer a las personas de que hagan cosas, de movilizar. En ese sentido hay un vacío que no ha sido llenado aún y que genera esta serie de problemas. Y estamos en la parte de decir las virtudes (bromeando). Y salió una, la veracidad.

Sí, la segunda yo creo que ha sido el compromiso con el proyecto social, porque si nosotros analizamos otros procesos revolucionarios en América Latina, realmente la prensa, en general en América Latina, en los procesos que ha habido, siempre la prensa ha sido uno de los elementos de ataque, y de tratar de debilitar los procesos revolucionarios. Entonces en Cuba se dio un proceso muy rápido y muy eficaz de asunción del poder de la comunicación por parte de la Revolución, y se ha logrado consolidar. Y yo creo que eso es en parte lo que justifica que en momentos de gran crisis económica como los que vivimos, ese modelo de comunicación haya logrado ser un actor positivo para lograr que el sistema político y los cambios sociales se mantuvieran en el tiempo, a pesar de esa gran crisis.

Pero que al mismo tiempo (te voy a poner esa cosa positiva con asterisco)... En un momento de crisis del sistema de comunicación, con las características que tiene el nuestro, la prensa, defiende el sistema revolucionario, también asume los costos de esa crisis. Es decir, cuando la realidad concreta es muy dura para la mayoría de la población, y la prensa no refleja esa realidad, si bien tú puedes ver instrumentalmente y compartes el principio de que es justo que se mantenga el sistema social por los alcances, también en el análisis más sencillo ves que las personas no ven en la prensa reflejados sus problemas, y que por tanto le van quitando el saldo político, o el saldo también de credibilidad a la prensa. Y es algo que puedes constatar con cualquier persona que hables. Es decir, las personas ven que la prensa no refleja toda la realidad, ni toda su complejidad.

Se dan cosas muy interesantes en Cuba que puedes señalar en tu tesis. Por ejemplo, se suele decir que nosotros informamos mucho mejor sobre lo que sucede afuera que lo que sucede adentro. Pero, sin embargo, mi opinión personal no es que nosotros informemos tan bien de lo que sucede afuera, como que informemos tan mal sobre lo que sucede adentro, que es lo que pasa. No es que sea muy buena la información de lo que ocurre en el extranjero, que a mí me parece que es deficitaria, que falta aún mucho por explicar sobre todos los fenómenos que están ocurriendo en el mundo.

Sara: Comenta sobre las cuatro páginas de noticias internacionales los viernes, y cómo en general se suele infravalorar la sección de internacional en los medios, ya que es cara y costosa de obtener.

RA1: Nosotros los hacemos de una manera mucho más humilde. Publicamos colaboraciones, tenemos un solo corresponsal en estos momentos en Venezuela. Tenemos también la agencia cubana de noticias, *Prensa Latina*, que tiene más de 34 o 35 corresponsalías en el mundo, que también son cubanos de alguna manera, y también tenemos el resto de las agencias el mundo.

Sara: ¿Trabajáis con las agencias de prensa internacionales?

RA1: Nosotros tenemos, más allá de Internet, un sistema de suministro directo de información de las agencias, lo que se llama (¿CAS?) (de *Reuters*, de *EFE*, de *Xinhua*), que esas no todas están en Internet.

Estábamos en la parte de que no es tanto lo bien que se habla del extranjero, como el vacío informacional en el interior. Y que las personas también ven eso como algo negativo, de ver la paja en el ojo ajeno y no analizar los problemas nuestros. Pero eso es parte de una tradición política también que inauguró la Revolución: el llevar la cultura política a las personas. Y una parte importante de esa cultura política es saber lo que está pasando en el mundo. Y a mí me parece lo contrario también, y es que hay muchas omisiones dentro de la prensa occidental, y a propósito se omite mucho del debate serio sobre lo que ocurre en el mundo para que las personas no puedan juzgar su propia realidad. Me parece que esa infravaloración que tú dices de las noticias internacionales dentro de los medios occidentales no es más bien una cuestión política, no sólo económica, que le dan muy poco valor a la noticia internacional.

Sara: Yo diría que es algo estratégico, porque no es casualidad que una ciudad como Nueva York tenga miles de corresponsales y que en toda África solo haya cuatro o cinco. Hay áreas en el mundo sobre las que no sabemos nada...

RA1: Y las encuestas estas que se hacen... No es por sobrevalorar mucho la cultura política de los cubanos, pero cuando sistemáticamente tú les llevas a las personas una cantidad de información sobre política internacional abundante, esto va generando, a pesar de la saturación, va creando una conciencia política, y el promedio de los cubanos tiene conocimiento sobre los principales conflictos, de los actores. No es que todo el mundo lo conozca, pero hay un promedio alto. Uno ve encuestas de otros países y ni siquiera saben ubicar en el mapa en qué continente está el país del que se habla. [Ejemplifica sobre Francia y Mali, y sobre Estados Unidos] Virtudes. Habíamos dicho el compromiso con el proyecto social. No hay muchas más (bromeando).

Sara: Vamos a dejar que hablen tus compañeras, si quieren añadir algo más sobre esas dos.

RA1: Yo tampoco, nos concentramos demasiado en analizar los problemas. Ah, mira, tengo otra. El sistema de propiedad. El sistema de propiedad social, no el sistema de administración. El sistema de propiedad social de los medios nunca se debería perder porque evita muchas de las contradicciones que tienen otros modelos de prensa, que es compromiso con ciertos actores económicos dentro del país, que hay una pérdida de la objetividad. Nosotros no tenemos eso. De hecho, se ha intentado y se está intentando insertar de otra manera, con otro tipo de compromisos económicos y ha costado mucho trabajo, porque de hecho dentro del modelo de propiedad social ese compromiso no existe, y eso es muy positivo.

Sara: A mí algo que me confundía es que según la Constitución del '76 los medios son de propiedad estatal o social. Entonces, para mí eran dos ideas diferentes. No sé si esto ha creado algún tipo de contradicción.

RA1: [Bromeando] Pues entonces puede que seas la tercera o cuarta persona en Cuba que se lee la Constitución. A nivel teórico hay diferencia entre social y estatal. Hay un concepto que está manipulado, que es el concepto de que lo estatal es social [las otras participantes muestran su acuerdo]. Estamos de acuerdo en eso. Que el estado es un representante de la sociedad a la hora de asumir la gestión. Pero en el caso de la prensa lo podríamos analizar, y podríamos decir que los medios no son del estado, son de las personas. Por tanto, se deben a las personas, no al estado. Porque también se da el problema de confundir el estado con gobierno, patria con Revolución, que no son la misma cosa. Se mezclan demasiado las cosas. Los medios son de propiedad social, no estatal, aunque sean gestionados por los organismos del estado designados a tal efecto. Pero me

parece que se deben a las personas, no al estado, no al gobierno, separando las ideas de gobierno y estado.

Sara: Justamente estaba viendo las memorias del IX Congreso de la UPEC y (RC4) citaba unos datos respecto al debate previo al Congreso...

RA1: El Congreso tiene un momento inicial donde realmente se hacen asambleas en todas las provincias y en todas las ramas (televisión, radio...). Primero se hacen separadas, y después se hacen juntas en el Congreso.

Sara: Me llamó la atención que la primera se la deficiente conectividad y tecnología informática, la segunda las limitaciones materiales; la tercera, pérdida de la cultura profesional; cuarta, bajos salarios; quinta, incoherencias en la aplicación de la política informativa, y sólo la sexta es la baja representación de la agenda ciudadana. Sí que están ahí esos temas, pero quizás con otro orden.

RA1: ¿Sabes qué es lo que pasa? El problema es para qué sirve el Congreso. El Congreso es el momento de debatir los problemas del periodismo y los problemas de los periodistas, que no necesariamente la misma cosa. Los problemas del periodismo son probablemente esos que tienes ahí, pero los problemas de los periodistas son mucho más puntuales: no tenemos conexión a Internet, no te lo dijimos porque estábamos hablando de los problemas del periodismo cubano. Pero tú me preguntas a mí cuál es mi principal problema, y yo te digo que mi salario, es algo bastante lógico.

Sara: ¿Cuáles son los problemas del periodista?

RA1: Te iba a decir, para seguir completando el listado de los defectos. El sistema empresarial que sustenta la prensa también es muy grave, atenta mucho contra la prensa, porque realmente se ve al periódico, a la televisión, a todo, dentro de esa lógica instrumental, como subsidiado totalmente por el presupuesto estatal. No se le da margen para que funcione como una prensa. Eso tiene que ver también con la forma de entender la economía del modelo soviético de prensa.

Realmente, se está viendo, se está analizando. Se están viendo nuevas formas de que los medios de comunicación funcionen como empresa sin perder sus funciones sociales, porque tienen mucho más margen de maniobra para generar recursos propios, para poder disponer de sus recursos para poder solucionar sus problemas que, como bien dice Dalia, existen. Porque nuestro periódico, por ejemplo, no tiene un presupuesto que diga ingreso tanto, y de esto puedo destinar tanto a corresponsalía. Eso no existe. El periódico no dispone de sus presupuestos. Es un plan elaborado por una parte por el periódico y por otra parte por el Comité Central, es una cosa macabra, pero no existe la forma. El director del periódico *Granma* no puede decidir enviar ahora mismo a un corresponsal a un conflicto grave en Rusia o en Ucrania. Eso parte del sistema empresarial que sustenta la prensa que no es tal, es una cosa subsidiada que trae muchos de estos problemas.

De lo que están hablando los periodistas es de que no es pedirle más dinero al estado para resolver los problemas materiales, sino que le dejen crecer las alas a la prensa sin perder lo que te dije: el sistema de propiedad y compromiso con los actores. Sin caer en esos errores, dar la posibilidad de que los medios de comunicación generen sus propios ingresos. La televisión es muy costosa, pero también es muy rentable en cierta medida para poner publicidad.

Sara: Yo tenía entendido que en algunas radios ya había publicidad.

RA1: Eso es un ejemplo que es *Radio Taíno*, pero no está extendido en ningún lugar. Lo que pasa es que sí que se está hablando mucho últimamente, y al parecer se están dando pasos grandes. He visto algunas cosas que parecen mensajes publicitarios, como por ejemplo (*¿Medio Oyente?*) en

TV, que está haciendo ubicación de productos a la cara. Es evidente, esto te lo regalo porque me lo dio fulano. Esa es una forma de propaganda. Tú me das un regalo para mi programa, o tú me regalas los muebles, y yo digo que los muebles de este programa son de tal persona. Y el set de televisión resuelve no tener que comprar los muebles. O la ropa que usa el presentador. Tú dices, la ropa del presentador me la hace tal persona, y con eso resuelves la ropa de todas las personas. Eso se está haciendo en estos momentos. El posicionamiento de productos en Cuba está prohibido, pero ya se está avanzando en Cuba en eso.

Primero se hacía de forma totalmente ilegal, pero casi todos esos cambios van aparejados a un cambio en el sistema total. Por eso es tan interesante el libro de Julio, porque él explica que la prensa es una parte del sistema político, y por tanto no hay ningún cambio que tú hagas solamente en la prensa y que vaya a cambiar todo lo demás. Ahora dices: está permitida totalmente la publicidad en Cuba. Entonces viene ETECSA y te dice que no tiene presupuesto para publicidad en mi plan, porque nunca lo he utilizado. Tendrías que hacer un cambio general, que asignarles recursos a empresas. Los cuentapropistas no tienen ese problema, pero tampoco un cuentapropista se va anunciar en el noticiero de la televisión. Al menos, si mantenemos los precios internacionales, un cuentapropista nunca se anunciaría en televisión en *prime time*, porque eso cuesta mucho dinero. Eso lo harían las grandes empresas, nada más.

Ves que es un cambio que llega a toda la sociedad. No es que se pueda decir, en Cuba se puede hacer publicidad y ya. Es importante porque toda la parte financiera, sistema empresarial y propiedad no son lo mismo, pero tienen que tributar a que la prensa haga un papel correcto y que no se vea sujeta a nuevos compromisos. Entonces sería peor, se vería sujeta a los compromisos del modelo este que ya te dije que no funcionaban y sumarle los nuevos, que es que si anuncio a ETECSA ya no puedo hablar mal de ETECSA. Porque imaginemos mañana que ETECSA nos ponga un anuncio de media página en el periódico *Granma*. Entonces, no vamos a hablar mal de ETECSA porque nos quita el anuncio.

Sara: Lo que me han explicado es que eso es un arma de doble filo, el hecho de que haya o no haya publicidad.

RA1: Exacto, yo lo que creo es que se puede buscar un punto intermedio. Si tengo mi sistema de propiedad social, y en mis principios me debo a la gente, bueno, ¿ETECSA me anuncia? Que me quite el anuncio. Ahora, lo que no puedo hacer es quebrar. Yo tengo que tener un respaldo del gobierno, del estado, y coger los ingresos para otras cosas. Pero no es que si me quitan los anuncios quiebro. Yo creo que, si se busca un punto intermedio, se puede avanzar.

Sara: ¿Hasta qué punto ha afectado el sentimiento de plaza sitiada la cobertura de la información? También no solo la cobertura de la información internacional, sino también la regulación externa que se hace de la prensa.

RA1: De mucho menos nivel. Bueno, esa es una teoría, que el por qué no se habla de determinados temas es por el sentimiento de plaza sitiada. Porque la otra teoría puede ser muy fácilmente que no quieren hablar del tema y que sea utilizado para otra cosa. Porque eso es lo que yo puedo pensar.

Lo que yo puedo pensar es que lo haces con buena o mala intención, y eso no debería estar en manos de quien gobierna poder decidirlo. Quien gobierna no debe tener en sus manos la posibilidad de decidir qué le digo o qué no le digo a la gente. La información y la prensa es un derecho de los ciudadanos, no es un favor que se hace al gobierno, es un derecho. Necesito saber cuánta corrupción hay en Cuba, cuáles son los casos. No es un favor, porque usted está mandatado por mí para mandar, no es que a usted no lo haya puesto un Dios como a los reyes, ni nada de eso. Usted tiene un mandato mío para gobernar, y entonces me tiene que rendir cuentas de lo que pasa. Usted

no puede escoger qué me dice y qué no. Yo creo que ese es otro de los grandes defectos. Quien gobierna no puede tener esa potestad.

Sara: Cuando dices ‘quien gobierna’, ¿estás hablando de Raúl Castro o de Fidel? ¿Estás hablando de los funcionarios?

RA1: Estoy diciendo de ellos, de los que gobiernan.

Sara: Porque mucha gente me dice que el mayor problema para conseguir información son las fuentes, que se niegan a dar información, simplemente se protegen con la excusa de poner en peligro la Revolución...

RA1: ¿Sabes qué pasa? Hay que entender algo también. Aquí la fuerza dirigente de la sociedad es el Partido. Pero en la relación del Partido con el sistema de prensa y el sistema político, el Partido tiene mucho de los problemas que tiene la prensa. O si hacemos un análisis lógico, la prensa reproduce muchos de los problemas que vienen de base del Partido. Si el Partido cumple con su función, que está mandatada en la constitución, y la cumple bien, es democrático. Pero en el momento en que el partido se pone también a participar dentro, de administrar la gestión económica, entonces le estás dando al Partido la posibilidad de ser juez y parte en el asunto, y eso se ha demostrado que no funciona. No puedes ser juez y parte. Tú no puedes ser quién decida si publicar un caso de corrupción cuando en el caso de corrupción estás involucrado tú mismo. Eso se ha demostrado en la práctica que no funciona. Entonces el Partido tiene que cumplir con las funciones que están establecidas en la Constitución: ser la fuerza dirigente de la sociedad, ser el representante de las personas y ser el garante de la democracia. Porque además es un partido único.

Eso le da aún más responsabilidad. Tiene que ser un defensor contra los casos de corrupción. Y sobre todo ser transparente, una cosa que no lo es, producto a veces del sentimiento real de plaza sitiada, y producto también de oscurantismos internos. Porque hay muchas cosas aquí que, por ejemplo, se manejan como informaciones sensibles que uno por Internet las puede saber, o la CIA las puede saber sin ningún problema. Entonces, cuando tú las ocultas, ¿a quién tú se lo ocultas? Caso Alan Gross. Las complejidades del caso, y las complejidades del caso Alan Gross las sabe Estados Unidos y todo el mundo al dedo. Entonces, ¿por qué eres tan selectivo en el momento de informar a las personas sobre ese caso al pueblo cubano?

Si vas a estudiar el sistema de comunicación de Cuba tienes que saber que la bola es la principal fuente de información de la gente. La bola es un rumor, pero el problema es que los rumores tienen un 95% de efectividad en Cuba. [Comentan sobre la bola de los espías].

La bola es que las cosas no se dicen públicamente, pero que todo el mundo las sabe. En todos los casos de corrupción de los que te hemos hablado, todos son conocidos, porque la gente... Uno se lo dice a otro, otro se lo dice a otro, otro se lo dice a otro... De hecho, muchas de las cosas que cree la gente que son una bola, son desde el mismo gobierno. ¿Cómo es que esto se sabe? Esto se sabe porque alguien lo dijo. Hay mil teorías, pero la bola es a veces un mecanismo de medidor social. Cómo reaccionaría la gente a eso. Hace poco hubo una bola muy fuerte de que Marino Murillo se había ido, porque no salía. Sí, es verdad, eso sí que se sabe, que también empezó como bola al principio. Había una bola de que se había quedado, Murillo, el que dirige la parte de...

Sara: ¿Cómo se contrastáis esa información como periodistas, cuando sale una bola?

RA1: Hacemos lo mismo que haría cualquier otra persona. Nosotros no nos dedicamos a eso. No investigamos eso porque no tiene sentido, porque además no lo publicaríamos. Podemos llamar a alguien para averiguar algo. –Oye, ¿tú has visto a Marino Murillo? Eso es lo que podemos

investigar, pero nada más. [Bromeando] O preguntarle al director, que va a un Consejo de Ministros, si ha visto a Marino Murillo.

También tendrías que verlo si tienes tiempo, ver que el sistema cubano de prensa tiene muchos nuevos actores, sobre todo en Internet. Y hay diferentes categorías. Tienes páginas web de medios oficiales, vamos a llamarlos medios oficiales, que tienen una política informativa contradictoriamente más abierta que la que tienen los medios que tienen circulación más tradicional (televisión, radio...). *CubaDebate*, está *CubaSí*, *CubAhora*. Entonces tienes algunos sitios nuevos, o relativamente nuevos como *Cuba Contemporánea* y *Progreso Semanal*, que es lo más novedoso dentro del escenario comunicativo porque lo hacen periodistas nuestros, es decir, no son periodistas disidentes. Son periodistas que trabajan en los medios, o que se formaron en la misma universidad que nosotros, que muchos de ellos trabajan en los mismos medios oficiales o estatales, y hacen esos espacios que son paralegales. Digo paralegales porque al final... no existe una base legal para que tú le pagues veinte dólares a un tipo por un artículo.

Por eso digo paralegal. Porque para contratar a un periodista aquí en Cuba tú tienes que pasar por un sistema de contratación especial. Pero en cierta manera también las autoridades, o se están haciendo los ciegos, o no quieren ver. Pero funcionan, y son actores importantes ahora mismo.

Sara: Cuándo os pregunté sobre la mentalidad de plaza sitiada, lo hice pensando en que vuestra sección es la que cubre Estados Unidos. ¿Se pueden publicar cosas positivas sobre los Estados Unidos?

RA1: Ellos nos ayudan bastante porque casi siempre hay muchas cosas negativas que decir. Desde 1959 para acá no han tenido ni cinco años sin invadir un país. Veníamos de Corea, en el 65 Vietnam, luego Granada, siempre tenemos alguna excusa para hablar mal de ellos. Aunque lo hacemos pocos. Por ejemplo, las noticias de Ciencia y Técnica, casi todos los avances son de Estados Unidos, y se pone. Nosotros no criticamos a la NASA, por ejemplo. Porque cuando la NASA tiene un proyecto de exploración espacial. No decimos que la imperialista NASA va a conquistar Marte ni nada de eso. No decimos eso, hablamos del proyecto. Porque se podría llegar a ese extremo, ¿no?

Lo que preguntabas de la plaza sitiada es exactamente lo que hablábamos al principio. El concepto de plaza sitiada, tergiversando a Martí, el concepto de que el periodista es un soldado. Es un contexto muy distinto creo yo cuando se dice ahora. Pero bueno, el periodista es un soldado, y tiene que cumplir, y tiene que ser ese proceso de instrumentalización para defender a la Revolución. Pero, ¿pero quién decide qué es defender la Revolución y qué es afectar a la Revolución? Que yo me calle en un caso de corrupción ¿es defender la Revolución? Eso lo dices tú. Esa es tu opinión. ¿Quién juzga eso? Es como la frase Fidel: dentro de la Revolución todo, contra la Revolución ningún derecho. Esa es una frase un poco complicada, porque ¿quién decide qué está dentro de la Revolución y quién decide lo que está fuera? Pero da igual, la pregunta en esa frase o en cualquiera que sea en el mismo estilo. ¿Quién decide lo que está dentro y lo que está fuera? El gobierno, decide el gobierno.

Sara: Cuando hablas del gobierno, te refieres a...

RA1: Los aparatos de poder ideológico en Cuba están distribuidos de esa manera: el Partido como fuerza dirigente, está la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular que tiene un Consejo de Estado y un Consejo de Ministros...

Sara: ¿Pero cómo llega lo que decide el Partido a *Granma*? ¿Por qué filtros?

RA1: Esa es una respuesta muy sencilla. Nosotros somos el Órgano Oficial del Partido Comunista, somos los que más fácil lo tenemos. El Partido Comunista tiene un aparato auxiliar que se llama Departamento Ideológico, que no sólo regula la prensa, sino que también regula la propaganda, los actos políticos. Tiene una serie de responsabilidades. Dentro del aparato auxiliar y su gestión hay una relación que no es de ordeno y mando, en teoría. Es una relación de sinergia entre los dos actores, en principio. Hay una serie de valores y de principios que se defienden desde ese órgano que son los valores y principios de la Revolución Cubana, que la prensa los tiene que materializar. Aquí, además, el director del periódico, que en teoría tiene la potestad de decidir sobre todo el sistema de publicaciones, es al mismo tiempo un miembro del Partido, una persona comprometida políticamente, que asiste a los Consejos de Ministros, que conoce la política del país. Hay muchas relaciones. No es que se bajen directrices, ni que vengan aquí todos los días para ver exactamente qué mandamos para allá.

Si lees el libro de Julio García Luis, él lo que plantea como solución al problema es que se rompa la estructura de que el aparato auxiliar dirija la prensa, sino que el aparato auxiliar dé directrices, que es lo que dice la Resolución del Buró Político del 2007. Y que hay algo que él llama autorregulación, que es que si yo soy periodista, y mi director es revolucionario, y comparte los principios de la Revolución y hace las cosas, pues nosotros mismos decidimos, en colectivo revolucionario, qué publicamos y qué no. Eso es una autorregulación, no una regulación frente a la imposición. Hay algunos que no tienen más autorregulación, pero sí más autonomía. Pero, estructuralmente, todos los medios de prensa dependen de un departamento auxiliar del partido, que es el Departamento Ideológico.

Sara: Pudiera ser en el caso que *Granma* que siga siendo el órgano oficial, pero que prime la autorregulación...

RA1: Lo que he oído sobre todo es que no es necesario que todos los medios sean considerados órganos oficiales. Es lo que he escuchado también. Quizás uno sí pueda ser el órgano oficial, y todo lo demás sean autorregulados. Ese pudiera ser un escenario.

Sara: Otras cosas. RA1, tú me hablabas de posibles soluciones a los problemas que tienen el periodismo y el periodista cubano. Me dijiste que se estaba hablando de una ley, ¿te parece que eso pudiera ser una ayuda? Habría que ver cómo se implementa. Creo que es un poco abstracto hablar de la ley. ¿Qué dice la ley?

RA1: Me parece que es un arma de doble filo. Todo depende de cómo lo hagan. Puedes no tener una ley y tener el sistema más democrático del mundo y funcionar. Y después puedes hacer una ley que simplemente lo que haga sea legalizar todos los vicios y corrupciones que hay dentro del sistema. Habría que considerar qué tipo de ley, con qué características, bajo qué principios, qué defiende, quién lo va aplicar, cómo. En sí mismo, el debate es importante. Ahora siempre el debate sobre el tema es interesante. Y lo otro es cómo se hace la ley.

Sara: ¿Qué información tienen sobre eso?

RA1: Nada, eso es un chisme. Se ha hablado... Es que eso no ha empezado, está en el nivel de estudio. Oficialmente, en el Congreso de la UPEC se habló. Si tienes acceso, léete las orientaciones del Buró Político de 2007 para la prensa. Es un documento público. Esas líneas que vienen del Buró Político son las más influyentes. Esas líneas vienen del Buró Político para su aplicación y son extremadamente democráticas. Con aplicar esas directrices del 2007 para la prensa, se resolverían en un sesenta o setenta por ciento los problemas de la prensa. Lo que te quiero decir es que una ley en sí misma no hace nada, porque esas orientaciones están ahí hace un montón de tiempo y se incumplen (holísticamente o heurísticamente) todos los días.

Y que oficialmente, lo único que es secreto en Cuba es lo que entra en una categoría legal, es el secreto de estado. Todo lo demás no es secreto. Pero, por ejemplo, aquí, hasta hace poco, estaba prohibido tirar una foto dentro de una escuela. En Cuba estaba prohibido tirar una foto dentro a una tienda. Quizás un ministro, o un gerente, o algo así pusieron la ley. ¿A quién puede beneficiar? ¿Estados Unidos está interesado en ver las imágenes de las tiendas cubanas? ¿O es simplemente que cuando tú le tiras una foto estás viendo la adulteración del precio, y tienes evidencia de la adulteración del precio? Esa es una medida de la nada aceptada y cumplida. Entonces claro, vas a hacer un reportaje y no puedes tirar una foto, porque están amparadas en una resolución.

Sara: Cuando oía esta bola sobre la ley de prensa pensaba, ¿sobre qué principios se va a basar esta nueva ley en Cuba? En América Latina hay un debate sobre la función de la prensa. Me preguntaba qué se va a buscar como modelo de prensa. ¿Hacia dónde se mira?

RA1: Yo creo que es un proceso doble, es lo que se está haciendo, revisando las mejores leyes del resto de los países para aplicarlas a las condiciones de Cuba, que obviamente son diferentes a cualquier otro país de América Latina. Se han buscado países en los que el sistema político-económico se parece un poquito a nosotros. Pero tampoco es que tú puedas decir que son iguales. Realmente, no lo son. Habría que aplicar todo eso. Pero lo que hablamos: ¿quién lo aplica? ¿cómo lo aplica y bajo qué principios?

Sara: Las quejas sobre cómo funcionan los medios de comunicación vienen desde hace mucho tiempo, desde los ochenta, incluso antes del período de ‘Rectificación de Errores’. ¿Todo este debate, por qué ha tardado tanto en llegar a la sociedad?

RA1: En ese sentido te voy a transmitir la misma duda que tengo yo como periodista y como persona, y que es la misma que tienen muchos el pueblo de Cuba. Hay muchos problemas en la sociedad cubana, no sólo la prensa, que se diagnostica el problema, pero que la solución no está muy clara, porque hay muy poca construcción con respecto a la solución. Por ejemplo, los problemas económicos y el cómo lograr esos cambios para transformarlo, también está muy oscuro. En el caso de la prensa cubana, está el diagnóstico certero de cuáles son los problemas, está el diagnóstico certero de cómo solucionarlos, está claro. No hay que hablar mucho, ni nada. Habría que ver cómo se desarrollan en la práctica, pero hay una construcción muy buena, de muchas personas, de mucha calidad, para aplicar transformaciones directas, planes. Lo único que puede pensarse es que falta voluntad política.

Sara: Pero en teoría parece que haya voluntad política aparente en algunos líderes.

RA1: El problema es que eso es muy fácil de decir. Yo te puedo decir a ti que creo que debes hacer un periodismo crítico, investigativo, y después te dejo las condiciones en que tú no hacías ese periodismo intactas. Aquí se confunde la fiebre con la enfermedad. La falta de profesionalidad de la gente, la mala calidad del periodismo, no es la enfermedad. Son los síntomas de la enfermedad. Entonces aquí usualmente una de las estrategias del sistema político es tratar de confundir la fiebre con la enfermedad. Tú me estás diciendo que el problema de que la prensa sea mala es que los periodistas no son profesionales, no son críticos... O que el resultado de que los periodistas no sean profesionales, no sean críticos, que se reciclen, que se vayan, es que el sistema del periodismo está mal. Entonces, esa es la enfermedad.

Sara: ¿Por qué, aunque ha habido este pronóstico, no ha cambiado el sistema de periodismo?

RA1: Si los periodistas saben que hay que cambiarlo, si los gobernantes saben que hay que cambiarlo, si está escrito cómo hay que cambiarlo, si el pueblo demanda todos los días que se cambie, ¿por qué no se cambia? Es bastante obvio en ese sentido, porque no se ha tomado la decisión de cambiarlo, y la decisión la toma quien gobierna.

Eso es lo fundamental. Ahora, implementarlo no es fácil. Porque si te remites al libro de Julio, en el año '86, en el proceso de 'Rectificación de Errores', había mucha capacidad profesional. No estaban ni siquiera malas las condiciones materiales. En aquel momento había cámaras, carros. Había grandes profesionales. Lo único que faltaba es que se tomara la decisión de cambiar el sistema de prensa para articular todas estas potencialidades que existían, pero han pasado casi treinta años. Entonces, desaparecieron las capacidades profesionales, ahora hay gravísimos problemas materiales, paupérrimas condiciones materiales. Entonces, tienes que hacer el cambio de sistema en estas condiciones depauperadas. Y también está en la visión política lo que ha sucedido en otras experiencias. Se sale de las manos. Es algo que sí se puede salir de las manos en el sentido de que la prensa es un elemento que dentro del sistema político tiene mucho poder, y que puede muy rápidamente dejar de estar al servicio del pueblo y del gobierno. Y también imagino que en la visión política también estuve por ejemplo en la Unión Soviética.

Sara: ¿Por qué, aunque hay un consenso, no ha cambiado nada? ¿Puede ser que haya habido otras prioridades?

RA1: Julio tiene tres teorías, de tres posibilidades: una es que haya sido aplazado ante la urgencia de otras medidas, o la tercera (no te cuento la de en medio) es que no hay voluntad política, de que realmente el discurso va por un lado y la realidad por otra. Esa sería la más tétrica para todos. Sólo pensándolo lógicamente, hay una gama de respuestas a esa pregunta. Una es que ha sido aplazada, otra es que quizás se quiere mejorar primero la economía y otra serie de elementos que afectan cotidianamente a las personas para poder después tomar decisiones sobre la prensa.

Sara: Algo que me interesa particularmente es la necesidad de crear una cobertura coherente con período por el que está atravesando la Revolución. Me decían que no hay una estrategia de comunicación adecuada y coherente de los procesos actuales de cambio.

RA1: Con el respeto de decano, si él me enseña la teoría política sobre la que está sustentada, y la estructura sobre la que está sustentada la 'Actualización' del modelo cubano, coherente de principio a fin, de lo que se quiere y lo que se va a lograr, yo le hago la estrategia de prensa. Yo no, cualquiera. ¿Cómo tú le vas a pedir a la prensa que sea coherente cuando le acaban de poner 240 mil dólares a un carro?

¿Cómo soy yo coherente con eso? Porque yo soy revolucionario; comprometido con la Revolución. Sé coherente y coméntame, hazme un artículo de por qué un carro tiene ese precio. Eso me parece que está mucho en el argot político, el hablarte con esas palabritas, pero es sobre todo demagogia. RC3 tiene que decir eso porque trabaja en la Facultad. Eso lo hacen mucho todos los dirigentes cubanos. Es demagogia que nosotros mismos nos ceguemos y digamos, es que tenemos que mejorar la prensa y ser más coherentes. Es mentira, si la parte política no es coherente, y no se explica a sí misma y no es coherente. ¿Cómo quieres que yo te la explique? ¿Qué quieres, que sea mago?

En Cuba, por ejemplo, los profesionales salen muy bien formados de la academia. Yo no conozco ningún caso en que algún periodista haya escrito mal lo que dijo algún político, que es un error básico de redacción periodística. Él dijo perro, y tú pusiste gato. Aquí todos los errores de los periodistas son porque hablan de un artículo sobre el cual los políticos no han hablado, donde él se imaginó cuál era la política y trató de explicarla. Después vienen y le dicen, no eso no era así. ¿Cómo lo voy a saber, si no me lo dijiste? ¿Si no me lo explicaste?

Sara: Me dijeron que todos los artículos, cuando sale una nueva medida económica, pasan por un aparato revisor.

RA1: Por eso los artículos tienen setenta líneas, no los entiende ni Dios y son uno cada vez que... Eso es un informe de Gaceta Oficial, eso no es periodismo.

Sara: Me pregunto por qué funcionaba la cobertura de ese modo.

RA1: Si tú tienes que crear una comisión (no sé si todavía existe), y esa comisión se va a leer todo lo que la prensa publica, entonces la prensa no está autorizada a hablar de sobre el tema. Es simplemente que se dice no. Es complejo, porque hay veces que hay temas de los que se puede hablar, pero a nadie le importa hablar de eso.

Sara: ¿Como cuáles?

RA1: Te pongo un ejemplo más concreto. Yo no puedo criticar la medida, pero sí puedo criticar la implementación. Vamos a lo de la aduana. Yo no puedo criticar quién, ni por qué puso la ley. Vamos a poner una ley. Yo no puedo criticar el por qué de la ley, pero sí podría mandar a diez periodistas a que vayan a la aduana y que verifiquen si el aduanero está cumpliendo o no la ley. Entonces, hay poca motivación en darle seguimiento a algo que es injusto. Pero ahí hay variedades, porque lo del carro ni siquiera puedes darle seguimiento. Sí que hay medidas en las que se le da seguimiento a la implementación, pero nunca se critica la ley en sí misma, ni hay un debate al respecto. ¿Tú imaginas que se haya debatido por qué los carros cuestan 240 mil dólares en este país? Eso bota a cualquier ministro de cualquier parte del mundo. No dura en ningún cargo público nadie.

Sara: Pero en la blogosfera se escribió mucho sobre eso.

RA1: ¿Tú has visto el tamaño de la blogosfera en Cuba? Yo tengo un amigo que escribió en un post que era como jugar a los pistoleros. Jugar a los pistoleros en Cuba era cuando tú eras pequeño y jugabas con unas pistolitas, así. Yo no digo que no sea importante, ¿pero qué impacto tiene? Se escriben para ellos mismos. En un país donde el acceso es limitado, se escriben para quien pueda leerlos en otros lugares. No digo que no sea un espacio necesario, porque es una transición y un proceso mundial al que algún día llegaremos. Pero hoy quién puede decir que lo que escribe Yoani Sánchez, por mencionarte un blog que tiene dos millones de visitas al mes, el blog de ella no lo lee nadie en Cuba, ni nada de lo que ella ponga ahí. Quizás pueda ser el origen de una bola. Eso no te lo digo yo, te lo dice la Oficina de Intereses de los Estados Unidos. ¿Tú sabes quién es Berta Soler? El noventa por ciento de la gente no tiene ni idea de quién es Yoani Sánchez, y mucho menos quién hace *La Joven Cuba*, RA14, el blog de RA20 (que supuestamente es crítico). Es más el impacto dentro del mismo sistema de comunicación político...Y los periodistas que la gente. Es una lucha en la cúpula. No es un proceso digamos.

Es interesante. En Cuba, a diferencia de otros países donde la blogosfera es un impulso de abajo hacia arriba, es decir, de la gente común hacia las esferas, en Cuba la blogosfera es un impulso de la esfera a la esfera, porque la hace una cúpula intelectual o política, que son los que tienen acceso a Internet en Cuba, para una cúpula intelectual y política. Es de las altas esferas a las altas esferas. Es una lucha palaciega, aunque ellos digan que son alternativos. Son universitarios hoy y mañana terminan en una embajada, porque es lo que están haciendo. Es una lucha palaciega, no es un proceso popular. Lo que pasa que el origen de este, digamos, marqués nuevo es un origen humilde. Pero se convierte en un marqués en unos días.

Sara: ¿Crees que de algún modo Internet está influyendo en lo que la gente recibe?

RA1: Pero, ¿qué Internet? El problema es que eso es un análisis limitado.

Eso sí. Mira, eso es cierto, es cierto que hay métodos alternativos, pero la gente los quiere ver únicamente en Internet. Yo te aseguro que la gente conoce más a Alexis Valdés y su programita donde habla de política. Tú le preguntas a cualquiera sobre la mesa redonda... Son cosas que llegan mucho más que *La Joven Cuba*, por ejemplo. Es mi opinión, igual estoy equivocado. La gente habla de Internet, pero habría que hablar de las nuevas tecnologías, de las nuevas formas, otras fuentes. Que antes en el año '65 tú hacías silencio de un tema y, a no ser que alguien por onda corta se tomara el trabajo de por onda corta mandarle hacia Cuba la información, tenías la posibilidad de que la gente no se enterara. Eso en el siglo XXI no se puede hacer. Pero de ahí a decir que sea Internet el escenario donde se está desarrollando eso, eso es mentira.

Sara: ¿Qué otros canales de información hay fuera del sistema oficial de medios?

RA1: La bola. El problema es que tu tío se lee el artículo en su trabajo donde tiene Internet, se lo dice a un muchacho, el muchacho lo dice en la Universidad. El problema es que 1) la gente es chismosa, y 2) todo el mundo se conoce. Lo otro es el aumento de las nuevas tecnologías, de las posibilidades que tiene la gente de tener una computadora, un DVD, de ver vídeos, de ver todas esas cosas... Ahora hay muchos móviles...

Cuba es un país extraño en ese sentido. Un país pobre. Ponen los celulares, autorizan a la gente a tener los celulares, y de pronto hay dos millones de celulares. Aquí hay muchas cosas... O te dicen: Cuba es un país pobre, los salarios son veinte dólares al mes. Y te pones a l lado de una tienda y ves cómo la gente compra. Mi salario es \$25, el reloj vale \$70, los zapatos valen \$77... Y entonces, tú dices, ¿cómo vives? Es imposible. Un país pobre e infraconectado... abren los celulares, y dos millones de celulares. Tenemos los precios de mensajes más caros del universo. En el mundo entero son gratis los mensajes. Aquí valen 9 centavos, y las llamadas de voz, 35 centavos (de CUC). Imagínate tú con la diferencia de salarios.

Lo mismo pasa con el tema de las nuevas tecnologías. En un país pobre, tú vas a las casas y todo el mundo tiene televisor, sobre todo en La Habana. Puede haber casos puntuales, puedes entrar en una casa que no tenga televisor. La gente gana veinte dólares, pero cuando empezaron los DVDs, una gran porción de las personas tenía DVD. Ahora mismo, una gran porción de las personas en La Habana tiene algún cacharro para leer, ver documentos y películas... Pero bueno, ves a los jóvenes. En Cuba, 1) está más barato que en España (en Revolico, todo lo que se vende en Cuba traído directamente de Estados Unidos, ejemplo Galaxy. Vale lo mismo que en Corea del Sur). Es un mercado que está creciendo muy rápido, y todo eso está impactando. Nauta, cuando puso los correos, estaba desbordada. Esta es una sociedad culturalmente muy comunicada. Tenemos dos millones de ciudadanos nuestros fuera, y más de cien mil colaboradores fuera. Lo otro es que piensa que esto no es Burkina Faso.

Esto es una isla históricamente de inmigrantes, donde una de cada cinco personas tiene una familia en el extranjero. Que no te sorprenda que, de no tener Internet, haya cinco millones de cubanos con cuentas en Internet. Si mañana ETECSA dice que va a poner Internet en las casas, a 200 CUC, a 300 CUC, a lo que ponga, te vas a amanecer mañana con que hay un millón de casas con Internet. ¿Y esto de dónde salió? El problema es que la gente dice, ah, mamá, ¿qué te vas a poner Internet? Yo te lo pago. Son muchos mecanismos para eso. El hijo roba. El nivel de vida de la gente es muy diferente al que reflejan las cifras oficiales. No lo pueden reflejar porque todo está basado en el mercado negro, en el robo, y lo otro la familia en el extranjero. Tú pones el teléfono y lo pones a vender por Internet, y en media hora tienes gente llamándote.

Sara: ¿Qué mecanismo está introduciendo *Granma* para hacer un periodismo más cercano a los ciudadanos? ¿Qué espacios de participación existen tanto en la página como en la versión impresa? ¿Y todo eso se filtra?

RA1: No, lo normal, como en cualquier otro país. La política editorial... Si lees los comentarios, no vas a ver 'Abajo Fidel' ni nada de eso, pero vas a ver que hay posiciones contrarias a la Revolución y están ahí puestas, e incluso críticas de cierto nivel a las medidas. Sacas al periodista de la voz única, de que lo que digo yo es lo que vale.

[Comentarios no relacionados]

Sara: Esa es otra de las virtudes que me señalaron, que aquí no hay periodismo amarillo, periodismo sensacionalista.

RA1: Pero fíjate que todas esas virtudes chocan. Es cierto que los políticos tienen derecho a tener su vida privada, pero el problema del derecho a la vida privada acaba cuando tiene repercusiones públicas. Y aquí hay políticos cuya familia, cuya vida privada, tiene repercusiones públicas y no se abordan. Si el hijo de alguien tiene un yate, yo quiero saberlo. ¿Dónde vive? ¿Cómo vive? ¿Por qué tiene un Yate? Eso no es periodismo amarillo. Si el hijo de aquél tiene un yate, y el hijo de aquél cierra una discoteca... eso es algo que el pueblo tiene que saber. Porque, además, ocultarlo es lo que facilita que lo pueda seguir haciendo. Eso no es hacer amarillismo, ni perseguir a los políticos. El problema es que los políticos tienen que tener una supervisión pública, porque si no hacen lo que les da la gana.

RD2

High-Ranking Member of the Union of Cuban Journalists (UPEC)

Havana, 22 July 2014

Sara: La gente con la que he hablado me ha explicado la importancia del último congreso de la UPEC. Me gustaría saber hasta qué punto los debates que ocurren en la UPEC pueden influenciar el contexto comunicativo cubano.

RD2: Creo que, primero porque se trata de una organización que está muy vinculada al desarrollo de los medios, de las culturas mediáticas, al desarrollo de un pensamiento sobre la comunicación en el país. Es una organización que influyó en el surgimiento y formación de las canteras de periodistas en Cuba. Ha sido la animadora, desde siempre, desde que se creó la primera escuela de Periodismo en el contexto revolucionario, y ya hay siete. Ha fomentado como pocas organizaciones la formación de la vanguardia del pensamiento dentro del sector y ha favorecido mucho los estudios superiores en comunicación: la investigación en tesis de posgrado, de máster, de doctorado, sobre los problemas del periodismo y la comunicación en Cuba. Todo ello con una visión multidisciplinaria y universal, no sólo desde una mirada única desde el periodismo y siempre teniendo en cuenta el país que somos.

Creo que la virtud principal de todos nuestros análisis sale por la relación y el compromiso que tenemos como profesionales que somos, y que debemos ser, con el país y con el modelo de prensa que debe tener una sociedad como la nuestra. Una sociedad acostumbrada a la participación, a tener un lugar común en nuestros asuntos de la política. Los asuntos de la política interna de la Revolución son espacios de la sociedad toda.

Del mismo modo, hemos sido atacados por poderosos medios financiados por el Gobierno norteamericano; desde los primeros días triunfo revolucionario se nos hace una guerra mediática, soportamos campañas orientadas a destruir la revolución, mediante formas de mentir bien estructuras y empleando poderosos medios para confundir al pueblo, desorientarlo y enajenarlo. Eso mismo hace que nosotros concentremos nuestro foco de atención en la calidad del periodismo, en el modo mejor de concebir nuestras coberturas de prensa, en el papel que tiene el ciudadano dentro de ese modelo de comunicación. Es decir, que nuestra prensa no sea una especie de espejo mágico complaciente, sino que ese periodismo que hagamos sea reflejo de nuestra realidad. ¿Por qué este país ha llegado hasta donde ha llegado, ha soportado las dificultades, las penurias, los problemas que se derivan del bloqueo y de nuestras propias irregularidades y torpezas? Este país ha llegado hasta aquí porque la mayoría del pueblo siente y aprecia el valor del compromiso y la prensa es parte de esa relación. Una prensa distante de esa realidad no le hace ningún favor a la Revolución ni al desarrollo y muchos menos a las ideas socialistas que profesamos y defendemos. Así que el cubano, como mismo te opina de la caña de azúcar y del tabaco, también te opina de la política y eso tiene mucho que ver con el sentimiento verdadero de libertad conquistada.

La primera pieza importante movida por la Revolución en los primeros años fue la campaña de alfabetización, el abrir las oportunidades de estudio a todos los cubanos y las cubanas. Descubrimos un mundo de justicia y oportunidades para todos. La gente de cualquier parte de Cuba, empezaba a disfrutar de los beneficios de empleo y de una vida nueva. Accedimos a las aulas en todos los niveles de enseñanza, sin discriminación. Hemos logrado un nivel de cultura, hay un alto nivel de conocimientos, hay una madurez salpicada con la suspicacia del indio que llevamos dentro. En el

período de los 90 algunos vinieron a “vendernos” modelos neoliberales pero aquí decidimos aplicar nuestras propias recetas.

El país está cambiando y la prensa tiene que cambiar. No basta sólo con que usted abra espacios de participación entre el medio de prensa y el sujeto, sino que ese sujeto tiene que ser un sujeto activo, porque es el que protagoniza el cambio en el país. La prensa no escribe sobre bases de ficción, la prensa escribe sobre la realidad, y esa realidad está cambiando. La prensa no fabrica la realidad, pero la prensa puede, con su análisis, ir explorando caminos, advertir, educar, mostrar, enseñar. Creo que esas son las cosas esenciales que visualizaron los análisis y tesis discutidas en el pasado IX Congreso.

EL empleo de los recursos de las ciencias, ha sido un factor determinante para el estudio de los nuevos desafíos en el campo de la comunicación en Cuba, y dentro de ello el papel del periodista; hemos sido consecuentes a la hora de proponernos los objetos de estudio y aplicar resultados. Nada ha sido fruto de la catarsis, de lo coyuntural, tampoco algo episódico, sino que todo está relacionado porque los documentos rectores y las ideas rectoras, más que salir de los políticos, de los dirigentes profesionales de la organización, salieron de los que forman la vanguardia intelectual surgida en el seno de la prensa y esa vanguardia que junto a los demás colegas le está aportando los elementos y los juicios necesarios al programa de fortalecimiento de la eficacia comunicativa de la prensa cubana, esos fueron, entre otros, los aportes de nuestro congreso.

Allí no se renunció a la herencia de quienes nos antecedieron en la dirección del gremio. El pasado nos da una visión culta de la política y de la comunicación, el pasado que ha sido el núcleo principal del que nos hemos asistido todos para lograr que este pensamiento se siga desarrollando. Algunos consideran que este noveno congreso fue un congreso muy aportador. Lo que hemos hecho todos después, no sólo los de la Unión de Periodistas de Cuba, como la organización que agrupa a los profesionales del periodismo en el país, lo que han hecho todos en el país (el gobierno, el Partido, las organizaciones, las instituciones) sobre el campos de acción de cada uno, ha sido mirar hacia el objetivo de perfeccionar las comunicaciones en un sistema democrático que propicie en los medios este ambiente de participación ciudadana, de rectificar todo lo que se pueda rectificar, mejorar todo lo que se pueda mejorar, apropiándonos del conocimiento necesario para el empleo de las nuevas tecnologías aplicadas a la información y la comunicación.

Es conocido que los públicos hoy no se informan únicamente mediante los medios tradicionales, ahora cualquiera puede hacer periodismo ciudadano -desde su casa-, con una computadora y conexión a Internet. Los cubanos, a pesar de que tenemos grandes limitaciones en materia de tecnología y de acceso a Internet, hemos logrado una significativa presencia en la web y en las redes sociales. Todo ello supone nuevos retos al periodismo.

Y usted se puede preguntar, ¿cómo logran esa presencia en la web si en Cuba ese servicio no está en las casas de familias? Desde los centros de trabajo, desde los centros de estudio. Y mientras esto ocurre desde el Gobierno de Estados Unidos se financian planes de subversión con los cuales se fomenta y estimula un tipo de mercenarismo —gente pagada— para hacernos la contra, y dar la apariencia de confrontaciones entre actores de la sociedad civil y el Gobierno cubano.

Frente a las limitaciones que nos impone el Bloqueo impuesto por el Gobierno de Estados Unidos, también en este campo del acceso a las nuevas tecnologías, a la información determinada por esas tecnologías, Cuba centró su prioridad en el servicio aplicado al desarrollo de la ciencia, la enseñanza y la economía, entre otros, e impulsó en lo social la creación de centros donde la población se iba familiarizando con el uso de las pc; también se crearon cientos de centros “Joven Club de Computación” en todos los municipios de país. Se sigue apostando por un futuro donde podamos tener libre acceso a esas tecnologías porque se habrán terminado las odiosas prohibiciones o limitaciones que nos impone el bloqueo.

Las modernas tecnologías de la comunicación son acogidas muy bien en todas partes, pero en Cuba más debido al desarrollo cultural y profesional alcanzado en estos años de Revolución. Los cubanos tenemos hábitos de lectura, oportunidades ilimitadas para estudiar. La primera cosa que hizo la Revolución, después de la alfabetización, fue liberar todos los libros que antes para nosotros eran objetos raros en una tienda, porque eran muy caros o no los podíamos comprar, pero eso cambió, ahora nuestras casas están llenas de libros, tantos, que uno de los grandes problemas que tenemos en muchos domicilios es que las familias crecieron y los libros están ocupando el espacio que se demanda.

Ese desarrollo cultural tiene esas contradicciones bonitas, pintorescas. Estamos, entonces, ante el reto de revisar el modelo, lo cual no quiere decir que se reniegue del anterior, porque la Revolución ha tenido un modelo de prensa que ahora perfeccionamos y mejoramos, para adecuarlo a las nuevas realidades y necesidades de información que demanda el pueblo. En los años del 'Período Especial' nos vimos obligados a cerrar muchas publicaciones, disminuir las tiradas y todo eso que ya sabemos. Todas esas dificultades hay que saltarlas. Hay casi cien municipios en el país que no tienen medios de prensa. ¿Cómo vamos a afrontar esas dificultades? Hay instituciones que están planteando la necesidad de abrir sitios web para comunicarnos, tanto para el público interno como externo. Eso es en el campo de la prensa.

Lo otro es seguir estudiando y perfeccionando los programas de estudio de la carrera de Periodismo desde un enfoque más integral y más atemperado a los desafíos de las comunicaciones en el campo tecnológico, ideopolítico, filosófico y cultural; de todo tipo. Se le ha conferido tanta importancia a la escuela y a la preparación de los planes y programas de la escuela, y a la capacitación de los profesionales de la prensa.

Disponemos del Instituto Internacional de Periodismo José Martí, un centro de estudios de posgrado para periodistas. También la Upec posee la *Editorial Pablo*, que hace libros de y para periodistas. Esta editorial aportó los libros que emplean las escuelas de periodismo —más de 80 títulos—, además de otras obras sobre periodismo escrito y temas de la profesión, escritos por autores cubanos.

El Instituto Internacional de Periodismo está abierto a colegas cubanos y extranjeros, como principal centro de capacitación y actualización profesional del gremio, donde cada año se realiza un programa docente que tiene en cuenta las demandas del sector y de organizaciones profesionales afines en América Latina. Nos empeñamos en construir una comunicación alternativa frente a un “mercado del discurso periodístico”, un mercado donde se fabrica la mentira y se vende en lenguaje atractivo, manipulador. Así, por ejemplo, se puede justificar lo que está pasando en Gaza, en Ucrania. Todo está muy bien articulado y pensado. Todo eso hay que estudiarlo. Hay que estudiar la guerra mediática, la concentración mediática, hay que estudiar los temas y cómo conceptualizar el fenómeno de la comunicación y la sociedad. Esos son capítulos sin los que se hace impensable el estudio y la preparación.

Nosotros tenemos un sistema de capacitación estructurado en todo el país, nos apoyamos en centros de estudios y sus especialistas y también en las universidades de todo el país.

Gracias a estos estudios y a las encuestas aplicadas hacia el interior del sector hemos identificado un fenómeno muy negativo que tiene que ver con la concepción burocrática del manejo de la información pública: el secretismo. El primero en denunciarlo fue el Presidente de Cuba Raúl Castro Ruz, y esa es una batalla que estamos dando desde una posición que no es antagónica, pero sí definitoria en el campo de la responsabilidad de unos y otros. Es decir, las instituciones están obligadas a dar la información de interés público, también como un modo de rendir cuenta y porque es un derecho ciudadano.

Sara: ¿Desde cuándo se lleva haciendo esa revisión?

RD2: Desde la Conferencia Nacional del Partido, en el 2012 y nuestro IX Congreso, un año después. Lo está haciendo el Gobierno central con la participación de la Asociación Cubana de Comunicadores Sociales y la Unión de Periodistas de Cuba. Cada organismo de la administración central del estado revisa y perfecciona sus estrategias de comunicación para su público interno y para el externo. Se rectifican diseños y se capacita a los funcionarios del estado que se relacionan con la prensa y están a cargo de los aparatos de comunicación.

El otro tema es que se perfecciona el sistema de formación de periodistas, se le concede más prioridad al conocimiento de las políticas económicas y sociales para el desarrollo de la nación. Cientos de periodistas cubanos cursaron diplomados de administración pública, a la vez que los reciben funcionarios del Gobierno.

Se han creado nuevos programas de información y debate en la televisión nacional y se han mejorado otros, para favorecer la presencia de los temas nacionales de mayor interés público: La Mesa Redonda, un programa que transmite la televisión cubana de lunes a viernes, trata ahora con mayor frecuencia los asuntos nacionales. Una o dos veces por semana el noticiero nacional de televisión presenta “*Cuba Dice*”, otro espacio del sistema Informativo que aborda con sentido crítico la realidad; el periódico *Granma* dedica dos páginas semanales a publicar cartas de los lectores con denuncias o reflexiona acerca de nuestros problemas cubanos; la prensa provincial con una tradición de periodismo más pegado a la gente, es muy aguda en sus enfoques, muy atinada y coherente en esta batalla. El periodismo de investigación está posicionándose, lo cual demuestra que el periodista ya estaba preparado para un cambio de concepto; un nuevo modo de búsqueda de la información y de exponer los contenidos.

Más de la mitad de las provincias del país tienen programas de comparecencia en la radio y la televisión, animados por el presidente del gobierno y el secretario del Partido en esos territorios, donde, frente a un micrófono y una cámara de televisión y acompañados por la prensa escrita, desarrollan temas de interés local. Es decir, los temas de la agenda pública en la agenda mediática son de una adecuada y necesaria presencia, también en la prensa territorial. Todo ello contribuye a seguir tomando la fuerza que deben tener los medios para informar, comunicar, escuchar, enseñar y aprender.

Sara: Esa ha sido una de las principales críticas.

RD2: Esa ha sido una de las principales críticas. Ciertamente, que la prensa ponía énfasis en cuestiones institucionales, y se hablaba poco de los problemas sociales. Bueno, las instituciones están para servir los intereses sociales y si la información se realiza de un modo más integral estaremos cumpliendo mejor nuestra misión, de eso se trata y en ello trabajamos sin copiar receta.

La prensa no puede ser ajena al país que vivimos, donde hicimos una Revolución para resolver los problemas del pueblo, donde Fidel fundó una escuela de participación ciudadana y se gobierna con el consenso del pueblo. Donde no hay explotados ni explotadores. Estamos inmersos en un proceso de ‘Actualización del Modelo Económico’ cuyo programa fue consultado al pueblo y ello debe tener su correlato en la prensa.

Bueno, todos los periódicos provinciales tienen espacios de comentarios y de periodismo investigativo, todos los telecentros tienen espacios de participación donde los dirigentes dialogan con el público interesado. La radio tiene un poco más de ventaja en eso porque hace muchos años que lo venía haciendo. La esencia es esa, no se trata de hacer un país dentro de otro país, es el país que se está ‘actualizando’, que está resolviendo problemas, que está derribando obstáculos

impuestos a veces por coyunturas, por soluciones provisionales que se fueron quedando, por una deformación que se va corrigiendo en la práctica. La información, si es un derecho del pueblo, un derecho ciudadano, no puede pasar por ningún elemento regulador que no sea que esto no se puede dar porque es un secreto estatal, porque tiene que ver con la seguridad nacional. Pero fuera de ahí, toda la información es pública y tiene interés nacional.

Sara: Julio García Luis hablaba sobre la autorregulación de la prensa en su tesis.

RD2: Exacto. Ahora, a propósito del libro, una de las cosas que hicimos terminado el Congreso fue distribuir el libro de Julio a todos los periodistas, a todos los directivos de los medios, dirigentes administrativos, Consejo de Ministros, a todo el mundo. Presentamos el libro de Julio como un motivo para discutir y socializar sus contenidos. Ahí en el libro de Julio están los temas principales acompañados de sus reflexiones, que también yo comparto.

Sara: Pero tardó mucho en publicarse. ¿Por qué se tardaron casi diez años en publicarlo?

RD2: Nosotros lo recibimos cuando la esposa lo pone en manos de la Upec, unos días después que él fallece. Creo que él estaba todavía trabajando en el libro.

Sara: Una de mis preguntas es ¿hacia dónde mira Cuba ahora? ¿Qué modelo de periodismo y qué sistema de comunicación se quiere construir?

RD2: Cuba mira hacia Cuba. Cuba es una singularidad como pocos países de orientación socialista, y el sentido de responsabilidad que nosotros nos planteamos sobre la comunicación no tiene nada que ver con la idea de que la noticia es una mercancía que se fabrica para un mercado. Tú sabes que, lamentablemente, en este mundo con pretendidas democracias entre comillas, la prensa es una institución mercantil. Existen grandes consorcios mediáticos que pertenecen a los dueños del dinero, empresas que expresan la orientación de los intereses del amo y muchas de ellas sirven a los fines de anestesiar la conducta humana, desde la información y el entretenimiento. Cuba tiene el deber de tomar en cuenta todas esas experiencias, incluso el modo en que se hace la guerra mediática contra nuestro país para poder defendernos, pero sobre todo Cuba mira su propia historia y sus propias tradiciones. Si te pones a ver las tradiciones del periodismo cubano, los líderes del pensamiento político cubano dejaron su impronta en la prensa. José Martí y otros, Fidel Castro, entre ellos...

Sara: ¿Qué influencia ha tenido el sentimiento de plaza sitiada en la forma en que se practica el periodismo en Cuba?

RD2: Somos una plaza sitiada, de verdad- el bloqueo yanqui no es cosa de juego-. Somos también una plaza muy incómoda para el imperio. Esa condición de país agredido pudo desarrollar en alguno de nosotros determinados instintos, reacciones, capacidades, quizás no siempre bien desarrolladas.

El síndrome de la plaza sitiada no puede llevarnos a la omisión, al olvido, a la postergación, al ‘no lo voy a tratar porque es muy delicado’. Los temas más sensibles requieren explicaciones más responsables. Es decir, ¿cómo estamos planteando los problemas? Desde una comunicación responsable, donde la autorregulación funcione, donde yo sepa que este asunto tratado de esta manera no hace daño.

Si nosotros tenemos un sistema de medios en el país, no siempre desde una emisora o desde un programa usted puede resolver un problema de la realidad. Tenemos un sistema político que se enlaza con el pueblo. Hay asuntos que se pueden resolver en el barrio, mediante el trabajo de las organizaciones: para resolver un problema en la comunidad tengo un delegado del Poder Popular

que elegí en proceso democrático y él me representa ante el gobierno local o nacional. Y así puede ocurrir en el centro de trabajo donde pertenezco a organizaciones que me representan. Lo que quiero subrayar es que vivimos en un país que no tiene que depender únicamente de la prensa para que se haga justicia, para que se respete el derecho y la legalidad. Eso de ninguna manera nos hace renunciar al deber de tratar los acontecimientos de casa mediante la prensa, de modo público. Un pueblo más informado no puede ser confundido.

Nosotros creemos que tenemos que perfeccionarlo todo, y en esa dirección se trabaja en la prensa y en las instituciones. Si observas como acontecen las cosas en el país podemos coincidir en que las políticas que se van aplicando están favoreciendo todo esto que nos proponemos. Se destraban cosas, se flexibilizan otras: puedo comprarme un automóvil, puedo vender una casa, puedo abrir un restaurante, puedo abrir una cooperativa, puedo viajar al mundo. ¿Cuál es el problema? Todo eso influye en la comunicación y otorga responsabilidades nuevas a los comunicadores. Dentro de esas responsabilidades, la prensa tiene que aplicar la suya bajo el principio de una libertad responsable.

Sara: Una de las cosas que más me ha extrañado siempre es que los esfuerzos por crear un periodismo más autónomo y más profesional vienen, como mínimo, desde el Congreso de 1986. ¿Por qué se ha tardado tanto en aplicar esas teorías en la práctica?

RD2: ¿Qué son 30 años? La maduración de las ideas. Para analizar Cuba, hay que conocer Cuba. En estos años ha sido muy dura la vida de este país, cerradas todas las fuentes de suministro, colapsados los abastecimientos para una tecnología que no estaba instalada aquí. Cambia la tecnología, cambia el mercado, cambia hasta el idioma de la comunicación, y aun así este país ha conseguido el milagro de un programa social envidiable, de un programa de salud, de un programa de educación. Un país, además que no pudo descuidarse en la defensa, que siempre tuvo la amenaza de estar pasando por una agresión. Habría que ser dueño de casa para ver, cuando tú tienes abiertos tantos frentes de combate, ¿qué priorizas primero, ¿qué vas a hacer después?

No se trata de la credibilidad, sino de la insatisfacción de la gente, no porque no crea en su prensa, sino porque quiere que su prensa sea mejor, por eso es más exigente. Yo no soy capaz de ver eso como una demora. Quizás pudo andar más rápido, quizás pudo ser antes, quizás fue uno de los capítulos que fuimos aplazando. Hay temas complicados, por ejemplo, cuando metes la economía a los medios de prensa y dices: vamos a abrirnos a la publicidad, y tú terminas vendiendo tus contenidos porque la publicidad es la que termina decidiendo el contenido. ¿Cómo hacerlo, entonces, en un país pobre, que tiene decenas de prioridades abiertas, tantas insatisfacciones que no han sido resueltas como la vivienda, la calidad de vida, el trabajo, etc.?

Bueno, ¿qué pasó con el neoliberalismo? Hay países por ahí que vendieron hasta sus cementerios, perdieron hasta el patrimonio sobre sus muertos, vendieron su televisión. Creo que nosotros tenemos la garantía y la seguridad de ser todavía un país unido, soberano, libre, con una visión nacional y no nacionalista, un país que sigue siendo solidario, humanista, un país que ama su nación, que da la vida por servir al otro. Hay valores auténticos que todavía se han preservado. Claro, quizás hay que esperar un poco, no quiero hacer conjeturas, y toma esto con una humildad suprema. No me atrevería a juzgar por qué nos hemos demorado treinta años en llegar a estas conclusiones porque estamos llegando, y felizmente estamos llegando nosotros, y felizmente no hemos sido desalojados por otras fuerzas. Lo estamos haciendo manteniendo el consenso, buscando el parecer del otro, estamos abriéndole cauce al talento. Creo que eso es lo que yo destacaría, que hemos pasado por un proceso de aprendizaje, que hemos aprendido la lección, y que la hemos aprendido oportunamente. Que hemos resistido poderosas fuerzas y aquí estamos.

RC3

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Havana, 10 July 2014

RC3: Hay diferencias en la manera en que la sociedad ve las reformas de los años '90 y la manera en que la sociedad las asume en los años 2000, en medio de la 'Actualización del Modelo Económico'. Lo primero es la no demonización (tampoco sublimación). Por lo menos, el reconocimiento del cuentapropismo, de la propiedad privada como un actor imprescindible dentro del desarrollo económico. Esto es diferente de los años '90, en que los cuentapropistas eran un poco las ovejas negras, el mal necesario. Creo que también la postura de la prensa contribuía a afianzar ese estereotipo, aunque no tengo la certeza pues habría que demostrarlo empíricamente.

De todas maneras, creo que hoy, por ejemplo, la manera en que se asume la propiedad privada, la manera en que se asume el cuentapropismo, la manera en que el estado comparte roles con otros actores es mucho más realista, es mucho más pragmática y mucho más ausente de estereotipos. Creo que hoy nuestro modo de enfocar el modelo económico es reconociendo la existencia de múltiples actores, es reconociendo la necesidad de diversificar nuestra propiedad, reconociendo el aumento progresivo que tienen esos actores, es decir, los propietarios privados, dentro del modelo económico del país, evitando todo tipo de estereotipos, de demonizaciones. Diría que, no sólo reconociendo, sino también alentándolos. Cuando se presenta en la televisión estatal una cooperativa, o un cuentapropista, o un pequeño propietario privado como ejemplo de la solución de un problema determinado que no lo resolvía el estado, de alguna manera se está reivindicando que definitivamente la propiedad privada se asuma como un camino.

Ahora, ¿cuáles son los límites de esa propiedad privada? Según lo que define el modelo económico, que no llegue a ser una propiedad monopólica; que tenga un nivel de concentración de la propiedad que abarque a un propietario, a su familia o a las personas que contrate (pero hasta un límite de personas); que no tenga un crecimiento o una dimensión que pueda reproducir una lógica que tendería a ser más propia de otra sociedad, de un entorno más capitalista, donde la propia competencia del capital privado va generando el desarrollo de muchas de esas empresas, que llegan a ser transnacionales.

La idea del concepto cubano, que puede también ser anacrónica, pero que es la idea del concepto cubano, es que haya una propiedad privada que tenga un peso en el sector productivo; que haya una propiedad cooperativa que tenga un peso en el sector productivo, y que haya una propiedad estatal que tenga un peso en las empresas y en los sectores del desarrollo nacional más importantes. Y creo que eso se refleja así en la cobertura de prensa. O sea, el estado como un actor protagonista, y el resto de las propiedades, no como males necesarios, sino como actores necesarios en la revitalización de la economía cubana.

Sara: Una de las críticas que aparecen en las tesis de licenciatura es la falta de debate anterior a la implementación de los lineamientos. ¿Por qué usted cree que ese debate popular no se ha reflejado en la prensa, que no se le ha dado cobertura?

RC3: Creo que hay varios condicionamientos que pueden estar incidiendo. Primero, la cobertura de los lineamientos no se sale del marco general de la cobertura de la prensa cubana. Hay un comportamiento en la manera de cubrir los hechos en Cuba, es decir, tú no puedes aspirar a que la

prensa se comporte por lo general de una manera, y que con los lineamientos se comporte de otra. Eso tiene varias expresiones: primero, nosotros no pudiéramos creer que vamos a tener una prensa más participativa que la sociedad cubana. Creo que la sociedad cubana tiene que ser más participativa y creo que esa participación, mientras más se refleje en una esfera pública numerosa, más se va a reflejar en la cobertura de prensa: que tienda al debate, que incluya una multiplicidad de voces. Es decir, hay una manera en que se configura el ejercicio de la política en la sociedad. También de alguna manera, si no determina, al menos influye en la manera en que se configura la prensa.

Los lineamientos fueron discutidos, muy discutidos. Incluso, por ahí andan cifras (que no las puedo reproducir ahora de memoria) que hablan de la cantidad significativa de opiniones que se vertieron en torno a esos lineamientos y de cómo algunas de esas opiniones, también una cantidad significativa, tuvo una repercusión en las modificaciones de la propia política de los lineamientos. Lo que pasa es que yo creo que hay una ritualización de la participación entre nosotros donde muchas veces consideramos que hacer pública las opiniones que conforman un debate podría, al mismo tiempo, perjudicar el tono, la configuración, el rumbo que ese debate tome. Entonces, muchas veces, probablemente esté mal; pero es hijo de un modelo de prensa que se corresponde con una sociedad en guerra. Casi todo lo que tú te expliques de Cuba, para bien o para mal, aunque nos cueste trabajo aceptarlo, creo que habría que encuadrarlo dentro de la manera de pensar las cosas en un estado de excepción. Aunque no nos guste, aunque nos parezca que debería ser de otra manera.

Lo cierto es que no es lo mismo el periodismo norteamericano después del 11-S que el periodismo norteamericano antes del 11-S. Cuando tú ves, por ejemplo, los debates entorno a Afganistán, en torno a las decisiones que se toman en Irak, en torno a las armas de destrucción masiva etc., te das cuenta de que hay por un lado una ritualización de la participación y, por el otro, una construcción de operaciones de relaciones públicas muy bien montado en función de generar determinados climas de opinión, y no esa prensa como cuarto poder que el liberalismo hizo suya como parte de un modelo que rápidamente se extendió.

Ese estado de excepción que fue propio de la prensa post 11-S, Cuba lo ha vivido durante cincuenta años de Revolución. Para colmo, hay una coincidencia histórica. En el 11-S murieron tres mil y tantas personas, víctimas inocentes como resultado del acto terrorista. Y en Cuba, han muerto tres mil y tantas personas en cinco décadas como resultado de actos terroristas contra este país. Eso ha configurado, a nivel de debate público, de esfera pública social, de capacidad para abrir el espectro de lo que la sociedad acepta en el ámbito del debate legitimado, contricciones, límites, prejuicios, estereotipos, desprofesionalizaciones.

Nosotros tenemos una parte de la prensa cubana muy desprofesionalizada. Sufrió mucho el impacto del 'Período Especial', sufrió mucho el impacto de cerrar periódicos, de reducir las horas de televisión. En este país había dos canales de televisión hasta hace diez años. Y de ellos, uno transmitía tres horas al día, es decir, una televisión de mentiritas. Y hubo mucha gente de la prensa escrita, de la televisión que emigró del periodismo hacia otras áreas. Y tú no fabricas un periodista de la noche a la mañana. Ni siquiera cinco años en la escuela de periodismo son suficientes. A veces, no es suficiente toda la vida. Tienes una prensa de ocho páginas que tiene quinientos mil ejemplares, pero tiene ocho páginas donde prácticamente no tienes espacio para decir nada. En el caso de la televisión y de la radio tienes más espacio, pero también viene de un nivel de debilitaciones muy fuertes del 'Período Especial'. Hay muchas características en el tipo de cobertura que hacemos. Primero, el clima de un estado de guerra que no ha sabido configurar suficientemente un modelo de prensa que le sea funcional al modelo de socialismo que queremos construir. Segundo, un problema cultural que tiene que ver con la desprofesionalización de la prensa, que no es único de Cuba [Ofrece ejemplos y experiencias en otros países]. Entonces, hay un problema cultural también, el problema del impacto del 'Período Especial' y de la crisis económica

sobre la prensa. Y hay un problema también que tiene que ver con la esfera pública y con la opinión pública cubana.

Creo que nosotros tenemos que avanzar hacia una articulación mayor de los espacios de discusión en Cuba, porque hay muchos espacios de discusión desarticulados. Por ejemplo, la revista *Temas* hace un espacio los últimos jueves de cada mes. La Asociación Hermanos Saíz tiene un espacio espectacular también. La UPEC tiene un espacio que se llama *Catalejo* que lo cubre los últimos viernes de cada mes. Por toda la ciudad hay espacios de discusión múltiples, pero esos espacios no están conectados suficientemente con los medios de comunicación y, por tanto, esa esfera pública se queda todavía muy atomizada, muy en los límites de los propios participantes en el espacio físico de los debates. No hay posibilidad de que el espacio público se convierta en un espacio articulado simbólicamente. En algunos casos sí, por ejemplo, en los debates de *Temas* hemos logrado ir colando algunos temas en los medios de comunicación, en la pantalla, en revistas de mayor tirada. Pero, en general, hace falta una mayor articulación entre estos espacios que ocurren en la vida real y los espacios que los medios de comunicación prestan para el debate.

Claro, hay una situación emergente con el sistema de comunicación pública cubana, que es que está colapsando cada vez más la posibilidad de los medios tradicionales, de la radio, de la prensa y de la televisión, de reproducir simbólicamente la sociedad por las formas tradicionales, y ocurre lo que está pasando en cualquier parte del mundo: *Facebook*. En este país, no sé cómo, pero hay un millón de accesos a *Facebook* diarios, a pesar de todos los problemas de conectividad y de la falta de Internet. Bloggers. En este país, si entrevistaste a RA20, que es una bloguera impenitente, sabrás que hay dos mil blogs sobre el tema Cuba que pululan en torno a la esfera pública cubana, *Twitter*... Es decir, hay un entorno en el modelo de comunicación en el cual los ciudadanos se convierten en productores de comunicación. Están vulnerando la producción de contenidos de los medios tradicionales y, aún más importante, están obligando a los medios tradicionales a conectarse con las agendas ciudadanas y a hacer las agendas ciudadanas parte de sus respectivas políticas editoriales.

Sara: Le preguntaba a otra profesora de la Facultad hasta qué punto los debates académicos, los debates de los blogs, de la UPEC, se reflejan en los medios y e influyen en las políticas de medios.

RC3: Ella a lo mejor te contestó con un ejemplo empírico que forma parte de su maestría, porque Paquito Rodríguez Cruz, en un blog que se llama *Paquito el de Cuba*, de un muchacho que es periodista, que es homosexual, y se ha convertido un poco en abanderado de las políticas de diversidad sexual en Cuba. Hay una anécdota que no recuerdo ahora precisamente pero que está muy bien recogida en la tesis de RA20, que ella cita una y otra vez, que tiene que ver con un voto en Naciones Unidas que Cuba tenía que ofrecer sobre políticas de diversidad sexual. Teníamos, al parecer, una posición respecto a ese tema un poco equivocada, una decisión muy conservadora. El propio blog de Paquito generó polémica, generó una concertación en el espacio público, generó una unidad en torno a la comunidad LGBT, y finalmente Cuba terminó cambiando su voto a partir de utilizar el blog y al bloguero como consultor (por parte del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores) de una política de diversidad sexual.

Sí creo que hay cosas que cambian. El Vicepresidente de este país fue a la graduación de los estudiantes de Periodismo y acompañó a los estudiantes en la graduación. Eso es evidencia de la importancia que el país le otorga cada vez más a la información y a la comunicación como un recurso estratégico de desarrollo. Díaz-Canel se reúne... Por ejemplo, nosotros que tenemos una cultura de secretismo muy fuerte en medio del estado de excepción, Díaz-Canel un poco ha sido el abanderado a partir de un millón de reuniones con los Organismos de la Administración Central del Estado, con instituciones estatales, para decirlo de manera comprensible. Ha empezado él personalmente a reunirse con funcionarios de esas empresas para demoler, derogar toda prerrogativa que justifique o aliente el secretismo y que evite políticas de transparencia. Creo que hay un aumento de la conciencia de los funcionarios como servidores públicos, y como servidores

públicos que tienen que rendir cuentas frente a la ciudadanía, que tienen que dar conferencias de prensa, que tienen que dar los resultados de su gestión. Creo que hay un cambio cultural y también un cambio político. Creo que hay una voluntad política de alentar ese proceso de transformaciones.

Ahora, una persona que nunca se ha enfrentado a un micrófono no aspira a que se enfrente de un día para otro, y que lo haga exitosamente. Esas personas también tienen el riesgo de correr el ridículo, y el modelo de prensa cubano no aliente el ridículo como práctica. Alienta que los ciudadanos digan y los funcionarios digan, pero tampoco convertir eso en un *reality show* [pone ejemplo de un periodista norteamericano]. El periodismo como cuarto poder ha erigido su prestigio sobre la base de escándalos: yo tumbo presidentes, o provoco ‘watergates’, provoco escándalos Irán-contra Irán. Hay un escritor inglés que tiene un libro que se llama *Hacia una teoría del escándalo político*, justamente tratando de explicar los escándalos.

Si el periodismo quiere recuperar su sentido ético tiene que saber a favor de qué está, qué causa defiende, qué entorno político defiende, qué proyecto defiende, y eso no conspira contra lo objetivo. No digo que no haya que ser objetivo, digo que hay que contrastar fuentes, que hay que poner a la ciudadanía a hablar.

Sara: Bueno, ahí hay mucha polémica sobre qué es la objetividad, porque lo primero que nos enseñan a nosotros es que no existe, que ninguna prensa es objetiva, que los periodistas no son objetivos, que no contrastan todos los puntos de vistas. Muchas veces, hacer periodismo ‘objetivo’ es limitarse a reproducir el *status quo*.

RC3: Además, la objetividad es relativa. El hecho de que *CNN*, que es objetiva, te ponga una

opinión sobre Cuba, un ejemplo hipotético, te ponga a Fidel Castro que dice: “Viva la Revolución”. Y te pone a Yoani Sánchez detrás que dice: “Abajo la Revolución”. No es objetivo porque hay una pequeña diferencia. Tú, independientemente de la posición política que tienes, no puedes plantear en términos de representatividad social el liderazgo político de Fidel Castro al lado del de Yoani Sánchez, que representa a un sector de la sociedad, quieran los que lo quieran o no, que es minoritario. La contra-Revolución en Cuba, sea por las razones que sean, por subordinación a intereses norteamericanos, por su falta de un proyecto político nacional, por la concesión que ha hecho a siempre a una agenda política foránea, no ha logrado un nivel de ascendencia ni siquiera sobre la población descontenta de Cuba. No digo que no haya población descontenta en Cuba, lo que digo es que esa población descontenta no tiene un liderazgo, una identificación que le permita encauzarse hacia un proyecto político distinto al que propone la Revolución.

Sara: Ese es el problema de la prensa, que se basa en las opiniones de la gente que conocemos y se tiende a simplificar y a polarizar en cualquier país, en cualquier sociedad...

RC3: Recuerdo en el 2003, estaba haciendo mi doctorado, el momento en el que Colin Powell estaba discutiendo el tema de las armas de destrucción masiva en las Naciones Unidas, aquel 15 de febrero famoso y era un *PowerPoint*, “ustedes ven este rectángulo que hay aquí, este es un camión que utiliza Sadam Hussein para enriquecer uranio, ustedes ven estos círculos, este es un almacén donde se guardan los camiones”. Si usted ve el *New York Times*, el 85% de la población norteamericana cree que Sadam Hussein tiene armas de destrucción masiva. Dos años después Collin Powell dice, “perdón, no tenía armas de destrucción masiva”, pero Sadam Hussein estaba muerto, y yo no digo que Sadam Hussein no sea un dictador, no lo estoy defendiendo, creo que es un hombre de errores políticos, lo que ilustro es eso.

Hay un paradigma que es muy positivista en virtud del cual se dice que si hago una encuesta y si te doy estadísticas te digo la verdad, entonces soy objetivo. Hay un artículo de Pierre Bourdieu que se llama así, “La opinión pública no existe”, es el desmontaje de cómo el paradigma positivista

para medir la opinión pública es una falacia, trata de concederle a todo el mundo la posibilidad de opinar como si todos opináramos de la misma manera y como si todos ocupáramos el mismo estatus en la sociedad, y supiera de lo que se está hablando.

Creo que la objetividad no existe, pero creo que al menos hay que proponerse ser honestos y la honestidad implica ver todas las caras posibles de una moneda, ninguna moneda tiene un solo color. Ninguna moneda es en blanco y negro, creo que el periodismo es la profesión de los matices si quiere ser sincero. En Cuba hay periodistas sinceros, creo que recogen, por ejemplo, RC16, si lo lees, te das cuenta que se mete con cosas que son fuertes, y RD10, que es un periodista de *Juventud Rebelde*, en *Granma* te puedes encontrar algunos artículos que también se meten con cosas que son fuertes. Hay una página muy interesante en *Juventud Rebelde* que se llama Diálogo de generaciones, que propone eso mismo, cómo piensa un muchacho, como piensa un joven, como piensa una persona más madura o llegando a la vejez en torno a temas como la sociedad, sobre la participación, sobre la constitución, sobre el ejercicio de la política y se producen encontronazos fuertes. La revista *Temas* que dirige RD18 tiene una larga tradición.

Te puedes encontrar una polémica entre un neoliberal residente en Miami, un socialista residente en Cuba y un socialdemócrata residente en Berlín. Hay un entorno de debate pero que muchas veces es un entorno de debate de élite, ilustrado, dentro de los círculos de una intelectualidad de vanguardia y menos dentro de la amplitud de espacios que ofrecen los medios de comunicación.

Sara: Me quedé muy sorprendida cuando comencé a ir a las defensas de tesis sobre el nivel de autocritica que los alumnos de licenciaturas delante de vosotros, delante de los directores de periódicos hacían sobre la prensa, decía, pero qué valientes... ¿Siempre ha sido así el debate académico?

RC3: Creo que son expresión, a pesar de que ha habido también debates académicos en el pasado, creo que son expresión de un cambio y de una voluntad, porque fíjate que en el pasado no venían los directores de medios. Por ejemplo, sobre la tesis de *Granma*, que vino el director, pasó una cosa buenísima, los muchachos le cantaron las verdades al director de *Granma* y el director de *Granma* se paró y dijo, “estoy de acuerdo con todos ustedes, ahora vamos a analizar juntos cuáles son los elementos que nos impiden un cambio profesional. Tengo tal nivel de desprofesionalización, tengo tal nivel de regulaciones externas de agentes que son más allá del periodismo, tengo tal incapacidad para formar una agenda propia”. Después que terminó la tesis, que fue compleja pero muy interesante desde el punto de vista del diálogo me llama el director de *Granma*, quiero que todos esos estudiantes vengan y presenten esos resultados en la redacción, y se produjo un taller donde los muchachos fueron a plantear los resultados delante de todos los periodistas, y los periodistas comenzaron a discutir con los muchachos y una cosa que por lo menos alienta un clima de más efervescencia profesional en el sentido de que se ponen los problemas del periodismo, de la profesión, de la política sobre la mesa, sobre la base de un diálogo que a mí me parece provechoso.

Sara: Sí, sobre todo que los teóricos del periodismo y los periodistas no siempre se entienden.

RC3: Aquí también sufrimos esto, pero insisto, creo que se ha ido consolidando el diálogo como una voluntad, como una expresión de un cambio de época, de algo que está en el ambiente que no es tangible pero que todo el mundo huele que es algo que apunta hacia un cambio. ¿Por qué vienen los directores de medios? Porque yo no los obligo, sino porque les interesa. ¿Por qué los muchachos hacen tesis y defienden con convicción? Porque se han formado con criterio propio. Pero esos muchachos van a los medios. No es que digan su opinión y luego se vayan a Francia una gira, son los mismos muchachos que van a *Granma*, entonces se produce un diálogo en el que los mismos muchachos están comprometidos a producir el cambio, porque los directores les están diciendo, perfecto, ahora te toca a ti. Si los directores no tuvieran la voluntad de recibir a los estudiantes no se

aparecerían por aquí. Que nos llamen y nos digan queremos traer a los estudiantes en función de un cambio cultural es porque creen que es una manera de transformar las cosas.

Sara: En 2013 se hizo el cambio de directores de los medios...

RC3: De algunos. RC24 que era director de *Juventud Rebelde* fue para *Granma* por Lázaro Barredo. En realidad, el cambio ahí fue el director de *Granma*, porque RC24 era de *Juventud Rebelde* y pasó a *Granma* y Marina, actual directora de *Juventud Rebelde* era subdirectora del periódica y bueno pasó a directora.

Creo que el congreso de la UPEC marcó no un gran cambio, sino la mayoría de edad del gremio en el sentido de que hemos comenzado a construir un discurso profesional en cuanto a diseñar un sistema de comunicación y en cuanto a cambiar nuestro modelo de prensa desde abajo, desde el discurso de los periodistas cubanos, desde el reconocimiento de que si nosotros no empujamos el cambio nadie nos lo va a regalar. Los cambios de la prensa cubano han provenido desde arriba. En 1986 Fidel Castro nombró el proceso de ‘Rectificación de Errores’ que provocó un estado de introspección, de debate, de mirada por dentro para la prensa cubana, como diría Julio García Luis que hubiera sido el entrevistado ideal. (Hablan entre ellos 33:00)

Sara: ¿Crees que la tesis de Julio García Luis fue influyente?

RC3: Absolutamente. Su tesis de doctorado fue en el 2004 y su libro se publicó en el 2013. No se había publicado antes no por casualidad. Esta sociedad no estaba preparada para escucha tantas verdades juntas, muy argumentadas y muy cautelosas. Julio era un hombre profundamente creyente en el proceso político cubano. Era un hombre que no estaba escribiendo desde la acera del frente. Era crítico del modelo de prensa liberal y de la práctica periodísticas en otros países y creía que nuestra práctica no era buena pero que tenía que mejorarse dentro de los límites y las lógicas de un modelo que ha intentado siempre, y que todavía intenta emancipar a la gente, darle cultura a la gente, darle pensamiento crítico a la gente. No es posible alfabetizar a la gente, tener educación y acceso, y que esa gente no se convierta en protagonistas en un movimiento que tenga repercusiones en todos los ámbitos de la sociedad.

Por lo menos, en términos teóricos, lo que es la brújula del socialismo es que aquellos, que tradicionalmente han sido invisibilizados, tengan voz, y yo lo he visto en América Latina. Tuve la oportunidad de vivir en Venezuela dos años y medio y con todas las críticas que se le puedan hacer a Chávez, yo me metía allá en los Cerros, donde el diablo dio las tres voces prácticamente inaccesibles y veía infocentros, es decir, pequeños centros de Internet, con altos niveles de conectividad, con la gente con acceso a Internet, con la gente participando, con medios comunitarios, con la gente construyendo la comunicación desde abajo. Cosas que no las he visto en Europa, pero forma parte de un cambio cultural y de un cambio informacional.

En 2013 se publica la tesis de Julio García Luis en el contexto del congreso de la UPEC. Esta es una decisión del Partido, aunque lo haya publicado la Editorial Pablo de la Torriente. En el Congreso de la UPEC nos piden dos ponencias que abrieran el congreso y el debate que se produce después creo que evidencia la madurez de un gremio profesional en torno a la conciencia de cómo producir, o cuán necesario es el cambio desde abajo. Lo que ha cambiado en Cuba es la conciencia en el discurso de los periodistas cubanos, no de la sociedad, aunque también, pero del gremio profesional, en torno a la necesidad y el imperativo en torno a un sistema de comunicación pública que sea más funcional a los intereses de un proyecto político y social.

Sara: ¿Hacia dónde mira Cuba? ¿Qué proyectos mira Cuba?

RC3: Creo que Cuba está mirando a muchos lados al mismo tiempo y eso tiene peligros. Ahora hay un grupo de periodistas que ha regresado de China. Conversaba con ellos y van a organizar una suerte de sesión para discutir un poco el modelo chino porque independientemente que a mí no me convenza mucho porque hay mucha desigualdad y habría que ver hasta qué punto las agendas ciudadanas llegan a los medios nacionales, y al mismo tiempo me dicen que tienen mil canales de televisión, me dicen que hay ciento sesenta canales en Pekín, que los medios se sustentan sobre modelos económicos muy flexibles y que tú como director del medio puedes tener una acción en un hotel y las ganancias de ese hotel se revierten no en el turismo sino en el desarrollo de los medios. Los medios funcionan mucho como empresas periodísticas.

Ahora, al mismo tiempo los niveles de control de las agendas mediáticas, los niveles de regulación por parte del partido no sé hasta qué punto pueda ser paradigmático de un modelo porque necesito información para eso.

Creo que nuestra brújula, independientemente de que el modelo chino pueda convertirse desde el punto de vista económico en referente, creo que nuestra brújula está en América Latina, en los procesos de comunicación para el desarrollo que están ocurriendo en América Latina, en la reivindicación de la discusión de los años setenta sobre un nuevo orden de la información y la comunicación que proclamó la UNESCO y que parecía perdida en medio de toda la oleada neoliberal de los 80 y los 90. Se está rescatando. Y es por eso que te encuentras leyes de comunicación en todas partes. Nosotros estamos evolucionando al concepto de una ley porque América Latina tiene las leyes de comunicación más progresistas de este mundo. La de Ecuador la de Argentina, la de Venezuela, la de Uruguay.

Hay un contexto de cambio en las leyes de comunicación, hay un conjunto de cambios en cuanto a estructuras de la comunicación, en cuanto a ministerios, muchas veces conducidas por el estado que muchas veces tienen un papel regulador y estimulador de la pluralidad comunicativa, de la democratización de los espacios radioeléctricos y hay un contexto de cambio en la producción de contenidos, en la posibilidad de que haya radio comunitaria, televisión comunitaria, que tu voz cuente y forme parte del espacio público. Creo que también hay vientos que soplan en América Latina que nos están soplando a nosotros. Los vientos de las leyes de comunicación, los vientos de la pluralidad comunicativa en el sentido de hacer una prensa más participativa e incorporar la gente a las agendas, los vientos de la blogosfera, del impacto de las tecnologías, de los blogs, de twitter, de las redes sociales en general en la confección de las agendas de los medios tradicionales son vientos que soplan también en Cuba, probablemente no soplan con la intensidad que uno quisiera pero son suficientes para que allanen un contexto de cambio.

Sara: ¿Crees que el cambio de liderazgo ha sido esencial para que se abran estos debates?

RC3: Creo que el cambio de liderazgo ha sido esencial para ocuparnos de las agendas políticas nacionales. Creo que Fidel Castro es un gran político que consagró en el contexto de un Estado de excepción una importante parte de su tiempo a construir una nueva relación con Estados Unidos, pero fundamentalmente sobre la base de un proyecto de soberanía, de independencia, que los norteamericanos tuvieron que aprender a respetar aun y más allá de su voluntad. Raúl Castro sin embargo ha puesto mucho énfasis y con una visión más pragmática en al agenda nacional, en un modelo de desarrollo que sea capaz de sobrevivir a la generación histórica de la Revolución, seguramente has escuchado el lema de un socialismo próspero y sostenible. La palabra prosperidad en este país en cierto momento fue una palabra demonizada porque era signo de ganar dinero, y ganar dinero es signo de envejecer y envejecer es signo de capitalista y capitalista es signo de lo que no debe ser y sin embargo hemos aprendido a convivir con la palabra prosperidad, a entenderla.

Sara: Al principio lo mismo pasó con conceptos como ‘la productividad’ y ‘la eficiencia’.

RC3: No creo que solo haya sido a principios de la Revolución, sino que ha sido un discurso de la Revolución. En el '86, cuando Fidel Castro estaba llamando a la 'Rectificación de Errores', fue la rectificación ética de una sociedad que ha perdido valores. En los '90, y cuando nuevamente hay un llamado a la 'Batalla de Ideas', es una batalla que tiene que ver con la recuperación ética de la sociedad. En un discurso reciente de Raúl Castro en la Asamblea Nacional también hay un llamado a la recuperación ética de la sociedad. Lo que pasa que los valores son una expresión del complejo entramado de las relaciones de la sociedad. Silvio Rodríguez tiene una canción que dice: "Si alguien roba comida y después da la vida, ¿qué hacemos?" Porque aquí hay mucha gente que roba comida y luego da la vida. Hay mucha gente que ha sido pobre, que ha ido presa, y luego ha ido a Angola y dio la vida en Angola. Y hubo mucha gente al principio de la Revolución que no estaba de acuerdo con Fidel Castro porque era lo peor que le podía pasar a Cuba, porque iba a vender a los niños en compota. Eso se decía. La Operación Peter Pan es resultado de que... Los padres saben que deshacerse de un hijo es lo peor, a mí no se me ocurre ni aun en los contextos de guerra más cruenta decirle a mi hijo: vete para otro país. Mi hijo se queda conmigo. Fíjate qué nivel de psicología de la perversión tiene que haber tenido una campaña que estimuló a los padres a que montaran a los hijos en un avión con la esperanza de verlos al fin de semana siguiente cuando la Revolución muriera. Y pasó el tiempo, pasaron los años, las décadas, y cincuenta años después los niños nunca más vieron a sus padres.

En medio de todas esas operaciones psicológicas, y en medio de los rollos económicos en los que estuvo envuelta la Revolución una y otra vez, creo que también hay deterioros morales y deterioros éticos que tienen que ver con las condiciones, que tienen una relación con la pobreza, con el entorno en que nos desenvolvemos. Nosotros somos parte de ese entorno. Ahora, este país ha producido, o por lo menos tengo esa visión, ha producido hombres y mujeres resistentes no de piel, sino culturalmente; cincuenta años de batallas contra imposibles. No tener aulas e ir debajo de una mata para darles clases a los alumnos. No tener aire acondicionado y morirte del calor, pero dar las clases, no tener Internet y buscar la manera de informarte por otra vía para tratar de conectarte con las tendencias que hay en el mundo. La gente está acostumbrada a no tener y a hacer. En el 'Período Especial', en los años más duros, en el '94, no teníamos comida, no había comida en este país. Y hay anécdotas horribles en este país de gente que comía cáscara de plátano. Comenzó la enfermedad por falta de vitaminas A, etc., la gente en bicicleta por las calles... Eso fue una proeza.

En medio de todo eso, veinte mil cubanos se fueron del país en balsa, en 1994, en medio de una crisis económica fortísima, en medio de eso que también se iba a convertir en una crisis política. Fidel Castro se apareció en el año '94 en un jeep ruso con otro jeep detrás, en Galeano, una de las calles del centro de la ciudad, y las mismas personas que gritaban 'abajo Fidel', por la ascendencia que encuentran en un líder indiscutible en los últimos cincuenta años en este país, comienzan a gritar 'Viva Fidel'. Claro que no habían cambiado de opinión. Eran unos 'cambia-casaca' (¿?), sólo que unos cambia-casaca que sabían de la popularidad y de la ascendencia del líder que aconsejaba en aquel momento parar; porque era más fuerte el líder y su capacidad organizativa en el país que el intento de derrocar la Revolución Cubana. Este país ha producido, con todos sus defectos, un pueblo que tiene en la resistencia un gen, y eso lo ha expresado culturalmente, políticamente; lo ha expresado en todos los sentidos.

Sara: Eso es lo que más desconcierta desde afuera.

RC3: Yo les decía a los venezolanos: Si ustedes hubieran tenido la mitad de los apagones de catorce horas que nosotros tuvimos, hasta dieciséis horas en un país que tiene 30° de temperatura, ustedes hubieran tumbado al gobierno hace rato. Creo que el país no puede pasar otra crisis económica de ese tipo. Ciertamente, es un pueblo cansado, no de resistir porque la resistencia es un gen, pero cansado de que la resistencia no se convierta en un resultado que produzca prosperidad. Es decir, la gente resiste con la esperanza de que después de la resistencia, después de la tormenta, sobrevenga la calma. Pero no todo el mundo está dispuesto a tener tormenta toda la vida, y las

generaciones más jóvenes están menos dispuestas porque están menos conectadas probablemente que las generaciones históricas con la vida, con la obra y con esas cosas que corren por las venas, que son el sentimiento de la Revolución Cubana. Es una coyuntura difícil y es una coyuntura interesante al mismo tiempo porque el futuro de Cuba tiene que ver con la correlación de fuerzas en América Latina, tiene que ver con la correlación de fuerzas no en el mundo (porque sería una tontería sobredimensionar el papel del Cuba), pero he visto mucho en el mundo, como también he visto en mucha gente crítica con Cuba y me he enfrentado a un montón de gente que ha hablado de Cuba en términos muy ignorantes. Porque a mí no me molesta que hablen de Cuba en términos sinceros, incluso criticando todas las cosas malas del país, que yo conozco tanto como los que las critican; me molesta que se hable en términos de ignorancia. He encontrado mucha gente que respeta a este país, y el respeto a este país es directamente proporcional a su resistencia.

RC4

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[La entrevistada habla del problema de medios y convergencia, de una crisis global que ningún país ha conseguido resolver, no sólo Cuba].

RC4: El asunto no era sólo, como se ha visto hasta ahora, una relación de regulación versus autorregulación, sino que ese sistema ha sido trasplantado a una nueva realidad sociohistórica.

Trabajé desde donde yo creo que hay que ajustar el sistema, que es el ámbito de las políticas públicas. Si hay una oportunidad de ajuste tiene que ser sobre la base de una nueva arquitectura jurídica, institucional que la propicie. Entonces, mi tesis lo que trata es afín a lo que ordenan las políticas públicas es ver una realidad 'A' a una realidad 'B', ese ajuste es posible haciendo un análisis lo más profundo posible de esa realidad y de sus interacciones con el espacio público digital, generar a partir de ahí una serie de principios generadores que te puedan llevar a una situación b. Mi tesis se queda en el plano del diagnóstico y de la propuesta de esos principios que podrían ser generadores. Por supuesto, no era objetivo de la tesis hacer la política y dos, tiene la limitación que está expuesta en la tesis, y además es lógica, porque la tesis la hace una persona sola, que lo hace desde la mirada de los profesionales de la prensa, que no son los únicos actores que intervienen. Están los decisores, están los públicos.

De alguna manera, estaba la intención de mirar un poco a nivel sistémico que es a mi juicio uno de los grandes déficits que han tenido las propuestas de arreglo, las intervenciones que han sido muy modestas realmente, para mejorar los problemas en el sistema de comunicación cubano, y especialmente en el sistema de la prensa.

Pero el objetivo es que nos estamos dando de bruces cotidianamente con un montón de problemas, que muchas veces la mirada o intento de reajuste es una mirada que sobrecarga el peso en los profesionales de la prensa cuando a mi juicio un problema fundamental, por supuesto cuando hay problemas de competencias profesionales etc, tiene que ver con un problema de la dirección y de las políticas.

Yo no sé si tú sabes que la última legislación sobre la prensa en Cuba data de la colonia española, o sea la última ley de prensa que hubo en Cuba fue la de la colonia española. Después, las tres constituciones que hemos tenido del siglo XX y del XXI es una disposición en un artículo constitucional. Pero eso nunca se ha registrado en un cuerpo legislativo de legislación positivo y yo te diría que para poder incluso ahora que se está hablando de una ley de prensa, de comunicación, en fin, no sé cómo la van a llamar, del gobierno, del Partido, del Estado, uno de los problemas que tendría es que podría ser muy linda y resumir todas las necesidades, aspiraciones, sueños del país en términos de comunicación, pero ser disfuncional, si no tiene en cuenta esa nueva realidad histórica.

Es un primer acercamiento que avanza mucho porque tiene una serie de estudios preliminares, especialmente el trabajo de Julio García Luis, tú lo debes conocer, que fue mi tutor en la universidad, y que él da un poco el escenario del que parte esta realidad de la llamada convergencia

mediática. Da unas soluciones teóricas importantísimas. Y tuve además una coyuntura muy favorable, y es que mi muestra es muy amplia ya que recoge las opiniones de toda la población periodística del país, porque cuando yo empiezo mi tesis me doy cuenta de que se están generando unas asambleas pre-Congreso donde se está generado mucha información y la participación de todos los periodistas del país, son 4000 y pico que participaron en un grupo de asambleas básicamente en el último trimestre del 2012 y bueno era una oportunidad importantísima. Todas esas asambleas –yo no estuve en todas, sino en algunas– generaron mucha documentación, generaron relatorías muy exhaustivas, generaron actas, generaron los informes de los presidentes de las delegaciones de base de la UPEC y hubo muchos compañeros que generaron documentos por escrito.

La gente, cuando discute en las asambleas, no sólo hacen pronóstico, sino que también hacen catarsis de los problemas que tiene mucha gente incluso avanzan hacia el deber ser. Incluso hay gente que va más allá y se atreve a esbozar cómo debería gestionarse esos nuevos principios que podrían aplicarse en el sistema.

Diagnóstico, principios o deber ser y fundamentos de gestión de esa nueva realidad (sus temáticas).

Sobre la falta de reflexión, de debate sobre la función del Periodismo en la Revolución.

Mira, no. Yo creo que hay un gran debate, pero que no es un debate... vamos... es público en el sentido de que es público en los centros en los que se está discutiendo el periodismo en Cuba. No sólo es público, sino que es sistemático. Lo que no se ha generalizado al entorno de la sociedad ni es visible en los medios generalistas. Y hablo incluso de los medios generalistas a propósito. Porque en algunas publicaciones profesionales y académicas estos debates sí se han transparentado (Temas, la revista de la UPEC, y en los debates académicos). O sea, hay una riqueza de investigaciones y de análisis sobre estos temas. Pero incluso yo presiento que JGL hablaba siempre de diferenciar el discurso periodístico del discurso profesional de los periodistas. El último sí está debatiendo en profundidad con mucho sentimiento crítico y sí, se es muy crítico, y yo te diría que incluso está mucho más avanzado ese debate entre los profesionales a veces que entre los propios decisores (que están conduciendo el proceso de ordenamiento político en el sistema, a veces eso pasa).

Sí hay un fuerte, fortísimo debate, nada complaciente, muy crítico, que pasa por todas las mediaciones que tú debes haberte encontrado en este país. Como decía Cintio Vitier, el poeta, es muy difícil hacer un parlamento en una trinchera. A veces las deliberaciones que no estén transparentadas en el espacio público común no quiere decir que no estén, están. Porque de lo contrario entonces no se explicarían ni los análisis, ni las investigaciones, los debates que se están produciendo en la asamblea y lo que está pasando hoy en el sector.

Una de las cosas que detecta la investigación es un fuerte sentimiento de necesidad de cambio del sistema. Lo que pasa que también es un sistema donde los procesos son más inerciales que en otros. Si tú miras la historia de Cuba en los últimos 54 años, ha habido corrimientos, modificaciones a veces sistémicas en la economía en varios momentos, pero no ha pasado lo mismo en el ámbito político-ideológico, y en especial en la comunicación. El único momento que yo recuerdo que viví donde se produce un debate esperanzador y algunos cambios esperanzadores (de hecho, mi tesis de licenciatura en la universidad era sobre la polémica en Cuba porque parecía que íbamos todos hacia allá fue a finales de los 80 con el proceso de ‘Rectificación de Errores’. Pero fíjate que es un proceso colgado de la reestructuración económica, no fue un proceso autónomo del sector.

Sin ninguna duda, nosotros tenemos que lidiar incluso cuando hay un sentimiento de cambio, aun cuando hay un discurso y debate profesional mucho más avanzado a mi juicio, que lo que se transparenta en torno a las decisiones sobre el sistema. Hay un fuerte estereotipo que pesa sobre el sistema, que es que el sistema no va a cambiar. Que va a haber una resistencia al cambio y de hecho

yo hice un ejercicio de prospectiva en mi tesis con casi una treintena de expertos en el país y el primer escenario que ellos ven posible es que no cambie el sistema. Un fuerte estereotipo de que hay muchos procesos inerciales, que va a ser muy difícil convencer porque está pesando también que es el estereotipo de la glasnost soviética.

Tiene que ver con tratar de desmontar ese presupuesto que pesa, pero que es un estereotipo que se sustenta en una falacia. La falacia de creer que fue la transparencia la que desmontó el sistema, la falacia de creer que los sistemas son inerciales en el socialismo. No tiene nada que ver lo que pasó en la URSS, no son las mismas estructuras de medios de los 80 ni en la URSS ni en Cuba.

En la URSS hubo una intervención de la derecha y de los procesos de articuladores en los medios tradicionales, pero aquí a esos procesos no les importa en absoluto intervenir explícitamente en los medios tradicionales. Por ejemplo, al gobierno de los EEUU, a las fuerzas mercantiles que está emergiendo. Tienen los nuevos medios sociales para eso, sobre lo cual no hay una política clara elaborada ni pensada. Es más, hay una resistencia del sistema a mirar, y a diagnosticar. Esa es una contradicción fuerte.

De todas formas, cómo decirte, yo te diría que en estos momentos el debate está mucho más fuerte, saludable, hay una vanguardia profesional que está comprometida en los procesos de debate. Esa vanguardia sí existía en los años 80. Era una vanguardia más en la producción periodística y menos en la teoría y de alguna manera se expresaba más desde el sentido común en el que el sistema común era muy importante. Lo que pasa es que hoy frente a la complejización del sistema cada vez se puede confiar más en el sentido común, hay que aplicar más la ciencia y la ética. Y esa vanguardia está ahí, y te digo que sí que había una vanguardia en los años ochenta. Fíjate, cuando empieza el proceso de 'Rectificación de Errores' a finales de los 80 de alguna manera a abrir una apertura de debate de crítica y de información en los medios cubanos, ¿cómo se expresa? Se expresa utilizando las técnicas del periodismo literario que era lo más avanzado que se estaba haciendo en América Latina, se reconoce también una vanguardia que me motivó a mí a estudiar periodismo. Yo estudié periodismo porque me fascinaba *Juventud Rebelde*. Ahí escribían sus crónicas Gabriel García Márquez, había un equipo de periodismo literario que estaba indagando no sólo en temas históricos sino en la realidad más inmediata (la factura, la anchura profesional importaba tanto como el propio contenido). Donde hay gente brillante haciendo ese tipo de periodismo y donde hay un acompañamiento de los debates que se están produciendo en la sociedad. Empiezan a aparecer una serie de programas informativos en la tele de debate, de opinión, de información, es decir, empieza a haber una apertura, una reconstrucción. Está la revista *Somos Jóvenes*, que hace de finales de los 80 la primera investigación sobre la prostitución en Cuba, de la cual no se hablaba, ni se pensaba, ni se concebía y que fue un poco la clarinada de lo que sería después el 'Período Especial'. Es decir, sí empieza a consolidarse, a estructurarse y a pensarse una vanguardia, pero una vanguardia que estaba directamente halando al resto de prensa del país desde el ejercicio profesional.

Sara: ¿El consenso de lo posible, es igual al consenso de lo ideal?

RC4: No, no necesariamente. El consenso de lo posible es una circunstancia histórica porque Cuba no ha tenido ningún aspecto ideal de convivencia en ningún aspecto de su vida en los últimos cincuenta y cuatro años. Es decir, tú no puedes ignorar las variables que funcionan en esta sociedad. Bueno, primero, esa relación histórica. Nosotros, y eso lo dice muy claramente Julio, uno de los problemas que él detecta es la pérdida de las funciones tradicionales de la prensa, que hay que reconstruirlas. Sólo a partir de eso se puede pensar en un modelo de periodismo desde el socialismo cubano. Porque nunca se construyó un modelo de periodismo en el socialismo. La Unión Soviética jamás construyó un modelo de periodismo socialista en absoluto.

Nosotros, en los primeros años de la revolución hasta casi el 1965, veníamos de una tradición del periodismo liberal, pero liberal anti-imperialista. A partir del año 65 hay otra coyuntura, es más

dura la confrontación con el gobierno de los EEUU, se hace más evidente que cualquier expresión de la información, o la transparencia en ciertos procesos internos, termina en un pretexto o en la posibilidad de una división interna. Había que preservar la unidad de la revolución. Era más difícil hacerlo desde la tribuna parlamentaria. Como dice Julio, había dos formas de hacerlo. O bien un proceso más largo de reconstrucción de ese tejido articulador entre la prensa, la comunicación y la política, o ir a un sistema, digamos, de control vertical de los medios y también hubo una gran influencia de todas las prácticas, no sólo económicas, de la URSS. Yo recuerdo cuando yo estudié en la universidad, los programas que se organizaron a finales de los 70 y 80 en la universidad tenía una asignatura que era historia de la prensa comunista, socialista, internacional, una cosa así, donde uno empezaba a estudiar el primer modelo de los medios liberales de masas previo a la I Guerra Mundial, la teoría de los medios de masas... y se terminaba con *Pravda* como modelo del periodismo.

Yo recuerdo, cuando yo llegué a la universidad, el idioma que se estudiaba era el ruso, e hicimos una batalla y nos dijeron de todo y terminaron incorporando el inglés justo el año cuando yo entré. Que se crea la Facultad de Periodismo como tal, porque antes era una dependencia de la Facultad de Letras. Entonces, esos conflictos están conviviendo en un país en el que, aún con de esas experiencias nocivas, porque yo creo que fueron muy nocivas, porque nuestras redacciones siguen estructuradas en el modelo *Pravda* de clasicismo, son sectorializadas, son un desastre. Tampoco la influencia era a rajatabla. Nosotros no somos rusos, somos caribeños. Entonces, la confrontación permanente con los EEUU ha de alguna manera condicionado, pero aun así pesaba mucho y seguía pesando mucho a finales de los 80 y a primeros de los 90 no sólo esos aires frescos que venían de Latinoamérica de hacer periodismo (no calco de nuevo periodismo latinoamericano). Estaba permeado por todos esos debates que yo creo que de alguna manera se mantuvieron, pero en el 'Período Especial' se cambiaron las prioridades. Se perdió la noticia, que es el corazón y la célula básica del periodismo. La gente no sabía cómo hacer información. Ella ya no vivió ese periodo, porque se graduó en el 89. Cuando yo me gradué, a ver cómo decirte, la copia no era tan mecánica.

Los que se graduaron antes que yo, fueron a la guerra de Angola, a la de Etiopía. Los que nos graduamos en mi generación, fuimos a las montañas del país en un proyecto que se llamaba el periodista en el 'plan Turquino'. Y entonces, yo salí disparada, empotrada, para la sierra Cristal, en el norte de Holguín, en el Oriente de la isla. Y llegué allí, me ubicaron en una casa que es una casa de visita del Partido (en Sagüetánamo). Me dieron una cámara fotográfica, tenía un rollo para un mes, una máquina de escribir y un mulo. Y fue la etapa más hermosa de mi vida, porque tuve un año completo recorriendo todas aquellas montañas, que estaban vírgenes en historia.

Fíjate cómo se inserta el descubrimiento profesional, lo que significaba ir a hacer el servicio social en ese lugar, lo que significaba el descubrimiento de todas esas historias con el país frente a un proceso de transformación de esa montaña. El objetivo fundamental, había habido una gran despoblación de esa zona que la gente empezara a compartir sus historias. Se frustra, porque en el año 89 y en el 90 nosotros íbamos como corresponsales de *Juventud Rebelde* en la montaña. El periódico *Juventud Rebelde* con toda la crisis del 'Período Especial', pasa de ser diario a ser semanal, pierde el 80% de su tirada, pierde todas sus corresponsalías, y entonces yo me tuve que regresar a la ciudad. Y entonces, ahí me encontré otro país.

Pero lo que te quiero decir, es que incluso en esas circunstancias, sí hubo intentos, búsquedas, de reacomodo (profesional, sin que esto implique rendirse). Y eso se ve muy claro en todos los documentos que generan los documentos del Partido en esa etapa. Yo te digo de verdad que espero que se parezcan a los documentos que generan los Congresos del Partido en esa etapa.

Yo te puedo decir que ojalá la política que se está discutiendo y que se apruebe se parezca a las resoluciones del Buró Político que la precedieron, que son tres. Que lo primero que dice es que el director es el primer responsable de lo que se publica en la prensa. Lo que pasa es que en la ley

estaba precioso, pero el problema siempre ha sido el tema regulación/autorregulación, de cómo eso se aplica en la práctica.

Cuando empecé en los 90 en *Juventud Rebelde* empecé de reportera rasa ahí en las lomas y vine a la redacción, después estuve ocupando distintos cargos, y en el 93 me nombró subdirectora del periódico, y fui la subdirectora editorial hasta el año 2010. Conozco muy bien esa trama por dentro. Efectivamente, fue un año donde se comprimió... lo primero que pasó es que nos quedamos sin infraestructura prácticamente. Imagínate que la prensa pierde el 80 por ciento de su tirada. Todavía no se ha podido reconstruir ni la mitad de las publicaciones que teníamos. Imagínate, nosotros perdimos en *Juventud Rebelde* teníamos dos ediciones, un periódico internacionalista que salía en los lugares donde salían tropas cubanas o cubanos haciendo servicios en el exterior, era vespertino, tenía una tirada de, imagínate, 200,000 ejemplares, terminamos a una sola tirada, 250,000 ejemplares los domingos. Hubo una crisis de infraestructura, hubo que reubicar a más de la mitad de los trabajadores de los medios, fue un trauma terrible. De ahí luego fuimos a la radio, después fuimos a la web.

También había un acoso enorme sobre toda la información que se generaba sobre Cuba, de tal manera que tú prácticamente no podías informar de nada. Fue un periodo terrible.

Pero, aun así, de alguna manera, o sea, la gente no es de una manera hoy, y de otra mañana. La gente no son robots. El espíritu de hacer el periódico, de contar las historias y de decir... Lo que se pierde de alguna manera es el ejercicio de la información, de hacer noticias, porque no había manera aun cuando había muchas noticias en la sociedad, pero tú no podías prácticamente lidiar con eso. De hecho, en esos años se creó una cosa que nosotros le llamábamos la brujería poética en *Juventud Rebelde*, que era una retórica, tratar de adornar con cierta retórica, cosas que no eran información, o sea, que un secretario de la juventud se iba a cortar caña, o los programas para el verano de los jóvenes, se trataba incluso desde la forma construir algo que estaba vacío de contenido. Y eso lastró mucho el periodismo.

Pero hubo un momento, yo te diría un momento importantísimo, de nosotros empezarnos a repensar lo que estábamos haciendo, se da con el proceso de Elián. Del secuestro del niño EG en EEUU, de ahí de pronto como estaba todo el país, había constantes movilizaciones, había noticias todos los días, fue un proceso de casi un año y después se mantuvo. Pensar cómo dar ese tratamiento. Ahí nos damos cuenta nosotros que, en la manera en que estaba organizado el periódico, no había nadie especializado en la cobertura del tema más importante para el país que era las relaciones Cuba-Estados Unidos, la ley Helms Burton y el bloqueo. Porque entonces los periodistas de internacional tendían al *MinRex*.

Ahí empezamos a reordenar ese proceso, otra cosa que llegó que fue la incorporación de los medios al escenario digital. En 2001 en *Juventud Rebelde*, *La Jiribilla*, periódico digital, una cosa insólita. Temas que habían sido tabú en los medios digitales, homosexualidad, emigración de Miami, Cuba USA. Semanario digital de *Juventud Rebelde*. Sale sábados, incluso por esas cosas que pasan en la vida, cuando quieres desarrollar una determinada práctica profesional con la mayor altura posible, agarras las herramientas que tienes. Un premio, periódico de *Wired* como el periódico más innovador de su tipo en la web. Este país tenía 256 Kb de conexión para todo el país. Era una cosa de locura. Nos pasábamos todo el día subiendo la información, pasábamos un trabajo de madre. Para gente que no venía de ese ámbito, que no sabíamos de eso, pero sí que sabíamos lo que queríamos como periodistas.

Y en esos años 90 se dan una serie de cosas importantísimas sobre información en Cuba, incluso cosas que hoy en día no se hacen. Yo misma escribí una serie de reportajes sobre la prostitución en Cuba que terminó en tres libros. Que fueron de reportajes sobre el tema de la prostitución en Cuba, un análisis muy crudo, y eso se empieza a publicar el primer trabajo 94-95 primero sale en la revista

Contracorriente, después libro, después una serie de reportajes en *Juventud Rebelde*. Varios trabajos sobre el tema de la droga, la economía sumergida, una serie de temas de conflictos sociales. ¿Qué pasa? Ya no son noticias, son reportajes que se publican en un medio que tenía formato más bien de semanario, que salía los domingos. Es también una etapa de mucha tensión en la confrontación Cuba USA, que está expresándose en esos debates, que tú prácticamente no respirabas. Nosotros estábamos concentrados en el ejercicio de la práctica profesional como podíamos, pero en el camino íbamos dejando cosas. Íbamos dejando la manera en la que se hace la noticia, de alguna manera, una práctica más independiente de las instituciones del país, una mayor independencia de las fuentes, y en el camino, tal y como ocurre con otros sectores de la economía, se está precarizando el sistema, la infraestructura llega a sus niveles mínimos.

Yo me acuerdo que en *Juventud Rebelde*, ese edificio que se construyó en la época del clasicismo soviético, sin ventanas, con aire acondicionado central. Entonces de pronto se da el traspaso de la informatización de los periódicos. Las computadoras se rompían, porque hacía mucho calor. Se fue el *Telex* y empezó Internet. Fue una época de mucho conflicto. Había un solo carro en el periódico. Una constricción enorme de la infraestructura. Y no se puede desestimar que nosotros, como éramos del CAME, compramos la imprenta de los 80 (*Juventud Rebelde* y *Granma* habían tenido su propia imprenta, ahora *Poligráfico Granma*) y aquel poligráfico *Granma* soviético a dos colores, con un tipo de tamaño de bobina que, al caer la Unión Soviética, después nadie las producía, incrementaba la producción del periódico, perdimos la autonomía de la propia imprenta, se pierde toda la tradición de impresores, esa cultura de la calidad del periódico.

En *Juventud Rebelde*, en los 80 cuando tenía su imprenta en la calle Prado, que los días de la madre te ponían unas flores, que olían, se les echaba perfume, había toda una relación muy entrañable, muy cercana, muy de la cultura de la producción editorial que integraba muy bien a los periodistas, con los impresores, con toda la gente que trabajaban en el propio periódico. El cambio de la cultural profesional, las nuevas tecnologías en una época de grandes constricciones tecnológica, de gran precariedad del sistema, se pierde independencia de las fuentes (si tú no tienes carro, ¿cómo vas a acceder a las fuentes?).

Y todo eso va generando una serie de problemas que ya llegan a su nivel más complicado. Súmale a eso a partir del año 2006 donde desaparece el periodista mayor de este país, que era Fidel Castro. FC tenía una capacidad diaria de generar noticias de mantener a un país no sólo en zafarrancho de combate sino de tener a los medios en permanente acción. Con una personalidad arrolladora, una figura carismática, un político con una gran habilidad para el uso de los sistemas de comunicación. Muy problemático.

Primero, que no hay ningún vacío informativo, la nueva realidad hace que la agenda mediática cada vez se parezca más a la agenda pública. El problema es que la agenda pública no está necesariamente en los medios institucionales. Y yo lo digo en la defensa de la tesis, lo que está pasando con las instituciones que tienen que resolver ese dilema, están perdiendo poco a poco su capacidad de expresión. Pero hoy esas dos esferas se están acercando más que nunca, porque hoy en día ya no tienes zonas de silencio, ni de vacío.

Además, en Cuba, otra dimensión que vienen a complicarlo todo, nosotros tenemos una aproximación completamente atípica a la llamada sociedad informacional, sociedad de la información (ver Urra). Porque aquí se está produciendo algo que no se ha producido en ninguna otra sociedad del planeta, que yo sepa. Que es, una sociedad con unas altas habilidades para el uso de las tecnologías y una de las más débiles infraestructuras del planeta. Da ejemplos de lo más habitual. Ha habido una política del país de crearlas, mi hija tiene 21 años, empezó su primer curso en un barrio periférico y esa niña desde que tiene 6 o 7 años está viendo computadoras de cerca. La enseñanza de la informática se estudia en las asignaturas curriculares obligatorias en las escuelas. Incluso en escuelas rurales. Tienes toda la población joven del país, casi 5 millones de cubanos

según las estadísticas, alfabetizados en una de las más precarias infraestructuras (tercera empezando por el final). Tú no tienes la infraestructura, pero tienes las prácticas y los acuerdos sociales para ello y bueno las herramientas se construyen. Tú ves los paquetes. Decir que Cuba es un país de desconectados es una falacia, y hay múltiples estudios que lo demuestran. Nosotros desde finales de los 90, desde el plano teórico y políticas públicas, muy por delante de América Latina. A finales de los 90 sólo Argentina tenía cierto desarrollo, pero no se estaban dando esos debates. *Infomed* 98, por ejemplo. El principal ingreso de exportación del PIB no podría haberse dado sin esa red. [La entrevistada expande esa idea].

Una serie de principios y valores que son los principios articuladores del proceso de la Revolución... Y es lo que explica que nosotros sacamos una revista con los instrumentos que teníamos y de pronto somos elegidos como mejor revista por WIRE. El asunto estaba planteado en términos de política.

En ese momento los EEUU desarrollaron una estrategia de subversión contra Cuba a la defensiva. Cuba fue el primer país acusado, antes del derrumbe de las Torres Gemelas, como el primer país ciber-terrorista de la historia. Ningún analista que se pare hoy a entender eso lo entiende. Se dan cuenta de que por el camino que va en la isla se va a despegar y se va a ir. El pensamiento de Fidel, 'Batalla de Ideas', el abrir el pensamiento a la gente y darle todas las herramientas para que pueda discernir en esa complejidad. Y aprovechar todos los recursos que nos dan esas nuevas redes. Cada momento en la historia de Cuba tiene un condicionamiento histórico.

En 2003, (Torres Gemelas, guerra de Iraq) se produce una escalada particular contra Cuba que incluso USA amenaza al país que, si se siguen produciendo robos de lanchas, aviones qué se yo se va a considerar como una amenaza a la seguridad nacional, que eso es guerra. Entonces hay como un reacomodo, la dirección de la revolución se concentra en otros escenarios, empieza a producir un discurso más paranoico en torno a la ciberguerra, se ralentizan los proyectos de intervención y de desarrollo en el escenario digital. En el 2004 cambia la estrategia norteamericana y pasa de la defensiva a la ofensiva. La ley para la democracia en Cuba de Bush recrudescer todas las sanciones contra el país, y a ahí el esboza posibilidad de invadir el país con celulares, empieza a redireccionarlo todo al escenario digital. Que Cuba todavía no tiene muy claro cómo se va a reorientar en ese nuevo escenario. Ellos en una estrategia muy ofensiva en el espacio público digital, mientras que nosotros estamos maniobrando mal en esa complejidad.

Sara: Me gustaría volver al título de tu tesis.

RC4: Ese consenso- es muy importante. Fíjate que, si tú te lees mi tesis, yo utilizo como técnica el estudio de la frecuencia de opiniones. Vas a ver que en un espectro donde hay cerca de 40,000 páginas que tuve que revisar, 25 o 26 variables, y entonces una serie de técnicas de estadística descriptiva, sólo siete fundamentales, consenso fundamental aun cuando hay una gran diversidad de opiniones (de todas las delegaciones de base). Tres ejes fundamentales problemas de precarización de la prensa, pérdida de habilidades profesionales y tema de la regulación, los siete están gravitando en ese espectro de alguna manera. Una de las cosas que yo quise dilucidar, ahí había un alto consenso en el contexto periodístico pero, esa es otra cosa (yo aprovecho también la experiencia de que vengo de este sector, he participado como periodista, como directivo, o trabajando en los propios medios sociales, desde mi propia experiencia) y sé que el discurso de los decisores es que, por ejemplo, la regulación es mayor por la parte de los decisores porque son muy bajas las prestaciones profesionales de los periodistas. Mientras que los periodistas dicen que cada más es más débil la práctica profesional porque hay mayor regulación externa de la prensa. Eso es muy fácil, tu coges una tabla y ahí vas a ver gráficos de correlación que dicen que, realmente, la correlación fuerte se produce entre regulación externa de la prensa y la pérdida de las competencias profesionales. O hay también una correlación muy fuerte entre los problemas materiales de la prensa y las prácticas profesionales. Entonces, ese es el dilema, ese es el corazón del problema.

Ahí hay un cuarto elemento, que está interrelacionado, que es la otra dimensión o eje, que es la convergencia entre los medios convencionales y los nuevos medios sociales que es un problema no resuelto. Aún en estos momentos, la dirección del sistema trata de ordenar esta relación de una manera administrativa, vertical, desde la nueva manera de dirección vertical que no funciona. Y ahí tú ves por ejemplo que se dan situaciones como las exigencias de llevar a una redacción integrada a todos los medios del país, tienen una conexión con un módem y de repente ya quieren que esté toda la plantilla en las redes sociales, cuando no se tienen ni suficientes computadoras. Es decir, una práctica muy administrativa... De una manera muy mecánica, muy vertical, muy administrativa.

Sobre todo, hay mucho consenso, porque parto del dilema de que son los problemas que ha planteado prácticamente el 90 por ciento de los periodistas desde sus delegaciones de base.

Yo creo que es un consenso muy alto, y ahí están investigaciones precedentes que lo prueban, de todo este periodo revolucionario. Yo trabajé con la muestra lo que diera, pero después llega una a la conclusión de que algunos de los principios axiológicos que están en investigaciones precedentes como registra Julio García Luis, como el hecho de que no se discuta la conducción del Partido Comunista del escenario de la comunicación y de la política del país se mantiene. Coinciden los resultados expresados por ese sector con los principios axiológicos en los que está fundamentado el sistema. Eso no es algo que en una coyuntura se reacomode o no. Lo que nadie está de acuerdo, y eso también tiene que ver con la historia, es que el partido sea el que gerencie los medios de comunicación. Y hay testimonios formidables, formidables. A medida que me leía la teoría, yo iba encontrando esos mismos análisis dichos de otra forma por profesionales del sector. Por ejemplo, hay una señora que en una de las asambleas dice, bueno, por qué en el sistema de salud de Cuba están tan bien definidas las funciones del partido, del Estado, de la institución, y del profesional. Por ejemplo, a nadie se le ocurre desde fuera de un hospital llamar a un cuerpo de guardia y decirle al profesional, oiga, voy a pasar por aquí y me da una aspirina. Hay todo un consenso en torno a que el profesional decide la vida o la muerte de esa persona, y después responde por sus actos, si se equivoca o no. Y todo el sistema se prepara para que ese profesional que está ahí tenga las competencias. ¿Por qué alguien desde arriba tiene que mandar una nota, y decir, nota informativa, y la publicamos y ya?

Sara: sobre la conceptualización del papel del periodismo en la Revolución.

RC4: Una de las cosas que nosotros hemos estado discutiendo y que se discute constantemente en los periodistas es dejar claras las funciones de cada cual. Y dejar claro para cualquier reestructuración sistémica muchas cosas que se dan por sabidas e interpretadas, pero que no funcionan en la realidad. Por ejemplo, la Constitución del país dice que la prensa no será un negocio, no se priorizarán intereses individuales o de grupo, pero que la prensa será de propiedad estatal o social. Está muy claro. O sea, hay una prensa que es estatal, o sea que se debe a las instituciones, y una social, que se debe a sociedad organizada. Lo que pasa es que aquí nunca ha habido distinción entre lo estatal y lo social. Ha habido una estatalización de los medios. Entonces, una de las discusiones es diferenciar eso claramente. Que no quiere decir que esté contra la Revolución, sino todo lo contrario. Ahí, por ejemplo, cuando tú empiezas a elucubrar todo eso dices, ¿el Partido qué cosa es, estatal o social? No, el Partido es social. Entonces, el Partido, su responsabilidad parte incluso de que esas instituciones o esos medios estatales funcionen. Además, el partido tiene que ser regulador, tiene que marcar las políticas. Pero no tiene por qué decidir o gerenciar un medio.

Por eso hay que aclarar muy bien cuál es la función del estado, cuál es la función del partido, de los medios de prensa, de los públicos. Y poner sobre la mesa una clarificación sobre esa discusión. Y a partir de ahí encontrar un modelo diferencial de la prensa en el socialismo cubano que nunca se ha conseguido. Nunca. No quiero hablar *off the record*, pero nosotros no tenemos realmente un sistema

comunicacional. Este es un sistema propagandístico aceptado de medios institucionales estatales, pero que no ha sabido todavía diferenciar claramente la función estatal de la social, e incluso elaborar un pensamiento, unas definiciones estratégicas y políticas, para lidiar con ese otro universo donde aparece la propiedad personal (no, no es estatal ni social. Es personal. Cómo lidiar con eso). Algo de eso se esboza en mi tesis. Trato de reflexionar, porque es muy complicado, pero a la vez hay análisis precedentes, o teorías que se pueden perfectamente ubicar. Lo privado termina cuando usted interviene en el espacio público ya sea digital o físico, entonces hay unas reglas que tienen que ser comunes para ese espacio comunicativo común. Y bueno, habrá reglas que deberán funcionar para ordenar la intervención en el espacio público.

¿Dónde vamos a encontrar la respuesta? Yo creo que no la vamos a encontrar en ningún libro de teoría, porque nada se parece a Cuba. La vamos a encontrar entre nuestra gente.

Primero, a ver, yo siempre le digo a mis compañeros, a la gente, tienes que tener en cuenta, Cuba es un país donde si algo se ha favorecido durante todas estas décadas ha sido su preparación y su formación. Toda la bolsa oligofrénica de Cuba no se puso de acuerdo para estudiar periodismo. El periodismo es una de las carreras que exige las más altas competencias. Los muchachos salen con todo un dominio sobre esos debates y esos conocimientos. Conocimientos que de algún modo están en las prácticas profesionales de este país. Porque asómate a una asamblea de un CDR, donde la gente debate. El problema, un mecanismo psicológico que en una sociedad asediada como esta es que distingue muy bien lo público de lo privado, es decir, hay una privacidad hacia el interior de las instituciones que no tiene una deliberación pública.

¿Qué es lo que nosotros estamos discutiendo? Que la comunicación es un elemento fundamental para el ejercicio de algo que es central para el funcionamiento de este país, que es la participación ciudadana. No se puede hablar de socialismo sin participación real de la gente, efectiva. Fíjate que entre los principios que salen en mi tesis es la comunicación como un espacio para la participación efectiva de la población en las decisiones que toman. Fíjate, no estamos abogando por la libertad de expresión. La libertad de expresión puede ser la libertad de que se expresen unos en detrimento de otros y no necesariamente garantiza la comunicación, ni más importante, la participación. Todo esto tiene que conducir a la participación efectiva de la gente, a que se creen los espacios deliberativos, de conceso y de negociación que faciliten la construcción de las políticas, de las decisiones, que involucren a las mayorías y a esos públicos. Por lo tanto, es una mirada de otra construcción. Eso no sale del aire, esto sale de las prácticas de este propio país, de la tradición de todos los debates sobre políticas de comunicación de América Latina que son muy avanzados, que tienen otros contextos históricos, pero cuidado, aquí está rearticulándose una zona de medios privados, que están articulándose en el espacio público digital, para lo que no tenemos regulaciones. A veces, los decisores no lo quieren mirar porque no lo comprenden, porque están anclados en las prácticas. Aquí tú tienes una publicación como *CubaOnline* que tiene una cierta visibilidad en el espacio público digital cuyo miembro es un individuo, que no son grandes emporios. Aquí dan un tablazo y lo quitan, pero van a aparecer más.

Es muy compleja, es muy diferente. Sí tenemos mucho avanzado que es el hecho de la protección de un sistema de comunicación estatal y social. Lo social, si funciona como debe ser, en torno a la sociedad organizada, y no en torno a la expresión de intereses particulares de ciertos grupos, pues puede dar soluciones muy interesantes, pero esos espacios hay que abrirlos y hay que protegerlos. Y hay que proteger algo que también es muy complicado en América Latina que es la protección de unos medios públicos, no estatales, que es un conflicto por ejemplo en Venezuela (...). Allí todos los medios son o estatales o privados, incluso los medios comunitarios son dependientes del estado. Bien, ¿qué pasa si cambia el gobierno en Venezuela? Todo pasa a ser privado, porque allí la oposición es de todos estos grupos que representan esos intereses. No han desarrollado una estrategia de defensa de los medios públicos, estatales y no estatales, en una condición de protección legislativa que pueda blindar la aparición y el respaldo del estado a esos medios. Es muy

complicado. En México tienen una situación totalmente distinta. Por ley, el Estado tiene que pagar publicidad y boletines de prensa a los medios, pero utiliza el no pagarle la publicidad (cuenta su estancia en México colaborando con *La Jornada*).

Es muy complicado, no hay manera de que se puedan tener todas las respuestas, y yo creo que sí, que la solución pasa por una solución de consenso, y de la articulación de ese pensamiento que está ahí, de que hay una vanguardia profesional, de que hay mucha gente muy buena en nuestras redacciones, lidiando todos los días, manteniendo heroicamente esas realidades, hay fortalezas muy importantes. Estamos muy fastidiados desde el punto de vista de infraestructura y todo eso, ahorita mismo estábamos viendo una encuesta de los presupuestos muy precarios, pero tenemos una infraestructura, en la mayoría de los territorios de este país. El alcance de la radio es casi del 100%, es una sociedad organizada. El gremio es muy fuerte. Hay un sentido de pertenencia a esa organización donde estamos agrupados la mayoría de los periodistas. Hay una academia que está formando a jóvenes muy bien preparados en la gestión del espacio digital y con una formación académica bastante decente, hay también mucha gente que está permanentemente siguiendo cursos de formación.

Nosotros tenemos actualmente lo que no teníamos en los años '80, un montón de doctores y de máster. Yo acabo de hacer un doctorado, estoy dando clases, y a las seis de la tarde me voy a hacer la gestión de un periódico digital que se llama *Cubadebate* de seis a dos de la mañana, todos los días de mi vida, incluso sábados y domingos. Y tengo una columna en *La Jornada* de México, es decir, mantengo mi ejercicio profesional. Primero porque es mi espacio profesional natural y me da un sentido de pertenencia. Pero bueno, es normal, RC9 es una de las grandes periodistas de este país y es la jefa de la cátedra de periodismo. RC3 tiene un espacio en vivo en *TeleSur*. Es decir, para nosotros eso es lo normal. Y así hay miles de gente.

Es un sector con conciencia de los problemas, que se sabe sujeto de cambio, o sea que necesitamos un cambio y que lo vamos a hacer nosotros, que no nos va a llegar de ninguna parte porque no hay por dónde virarse. Es decir, no hay ningún país como Cuba. Esos otros países lo que sí que te dicen es por dónde van, cuáles son los fundamentos para hacer un buen periodismo. Después, tú eso lo tienes que integrar en un país como Cuba, con sus complejidades. Donde sí, hay una relación muy paternalista de los decisores hacia los medios, pero tú te equivocas, o haces lo que te da la gana, y no te pasa nada, nomás que te pueden dar un cocotazo. A mí me dan cocotazos todos los días. Pero o sea no es que te cueste la vida.

¿Cuál es el problema? Uno de los problemas que sí afecta al sistema es que la precarización de la prensa no es sólo de la infraestructura, es la precarización del salario. Yo te puedo decir que el salario medio mensual en Cuba está por debajo del salario medio en el sector estatal y privado del país. Y ahí es donde tú ves una de las principales causas de la migración hacia otros sectores más solventes. Por eso las soluciones no son, como se ha pretendido en otros momentos históricos del país, de reconfiguración de parte del sistema, sino que tienen que partir de la infraestructura y de la estructura económica, y también de las políticas de gestión de la prensa en el plano de regulación y autorregulación, pero no sólo de regulación autorregulación. Una de las discusiones que nosotros estamos llevando ahora de hacer un experimento bajo otras reglas del juego donde pueda existir la posibilidad de pagar al personal periodístico en función de sus resultados. Como se está haciendo en otros sectores de la economía del país. Pero ahora ni eso podemos, porque todo el sistema la prensa es una actividad presupuestada.

Pero quiero decirte que las propuestas, los análisis, los estudios se están haciendo desde allí (los periodistas), con un altísimo consenso. Mira este país se ha mantenido durante cincuenta años es porque ha habido una dirección en cierto modo pragmático que ha tenido que cambiar lo que ha tenido que cambiar para seguir manteniendo las esencias de su proceso. Y entonces yo creo que este tema es un tema de seguridad nacional. Hoy lo que se está debatiendo en el país es la capacidad que

tiene la Revolución de comunicarse e interactuar con la sociedad en las nuevas circunstancias históricas. Y eso pasa porque los medios del sistema, los medios institucionales, que no significa que sean necesariamente estatales (mujeres, sindicatos, distintas organizaciones sociales, las que sean) tengan la capacidad, tengan los medios eficaces y efectivos para poder defender ese proyecto. Y construir ese consenso, no ya en el interior del medio, que sabemos que tenemos que cambiarlo, sino en la sociedad.

Pero ahí ese consenso depende de que esos medios sean las plataformas que faciliten la participación ciudadana en las decisiones que le competen dentro del país. Todas las que sean. Y para eso hay que rescatar, partiendo de lo que dice Julio, de rescate de sus funciones. ¿Cuál es su función? Ser el medio el que explora una realidad y la traduzca teniendo en cuenta las distintas fuentes, los antecedentes, sea vehículo de los problemas, sea un espacio de deliberación social, tenga capacidad crítica, es decir, las funciones tradicionales sobre un proyecto de construcción colectiva del país. Es difícil, es difícil pero sí se puede. Y yo creo que las decisiones que se tengan que tomar, se tomarán. Muy agotador, difícil, porque para tú realmente el cambio más difícil que nos toca por delante es convencer a los decisores, incluso educar a la propia población.... para que se entienda que bajo las viejas maneras de administrar y de conducir el

espacio de comunicación, no habrá posibilidades de que este país sostenga un diálogo, o por lo menos una interacción entre el sistema político de la cultura y de la comunicación que permita enfocarse en esos objetivos. No es posible.

Tú tienes que incluso lograr que, a través de esos medios, los que sean, se puedan dar sinergias entre estructuras jerárquicas, con esas estructuras autorreguladas. Y tú tienes además de tratar de hacer coincidir las políticas con al menos con tres dimensiones que son muy importantes en este escenario, que es la infraestructura, los contenidos y los medios. Todo eso está muy desarticulado. Tú ves por ejemplo las políticas de desarrollo de celulares están muy claras, pero nadie ha pensado en qué contenido se les va a poner. Entonces, eso está generando un vacío.

Eso explica por qué EEUU se gasta los millones de dólares que se gastó para hacer el *Zunzuneo*, que fue para crear contenidos. Decía un bloguero de Miami, muy gracioso, muy ingenioso. El problema es que a nosotros nos meten en una ecuación muy simplista muchas veces, no entienden, y dice: A los cubanos les dan una botella, un mechero, un algodón y gasolina y van a hacer un cóctel molotov. Pero los cubanos lo que hacen es un reverbero, una cocina. Porque ellos tratan de utilizar con fines políticos una necesidad, pero no necesariamente conduce a los objetivos que ellos quieren. Porque la gente lo usa para lo que lo necesita, que es por ejemplo comunicarse con la familia. O sea, mucha gente se metió en porque no puedes enviar un SMS a EEUU, está prohibido. Es recaro llamar. No está aprobado el envío regular de SMS. Por eso el *Zunzuneo* tuvo que inventarse toda una infraestructura a través de terceros países de forma ilegal, porque el bloqueo no lo permite. La gente se registró no para cambiar el país, que no le importa hacerlo, sino para resolver una necesidad de comunicación. Hay de todo, hay oportunismo político, hay manipulación del lado de allá, lo que tú quieras. Pero resolvió un problema. Se explica en que tú no puedes tener una estrategia de ETECSA de desarrollo y extensión de los celulares sin que tú no tengas también una estrategia de que la gente utilice ésto como medio de comunicación, que lo es.

Sara: ¿Cómo consideras tu revista Vistar dentro del espectro de los medios cubanos?

RA5: Más bien creo que es el resultado de pensar en grande, de pensar diferente, de tener otra visión de lo que es la prensa, de lo que es el periodismo. No nos hemos guiado por escuelas de pensamiento, simplemente hemos puesto un poco de lo que cada uno sabe hacer para crear la revista. Por supuesto hemos tenido que buscar periodistas y editores, pero en lo laboral unir a un grupo de personas que no sólo me han hecho noticioso, sino que le pongan un pedazo de sí al proyecto. Yo soy el fundador y el creador de la idea, pero solamente estoy en el equipo como el director. No es que sea el jefe, ni que mi criterio esté por encima del de ninguno de los miembros del equipo creativo. Hacemos una reunión todos al principio de cada mes donde cada cuál dice lo que quiere y a partir de ahí nos guiamos. Tenemos como un patrón de consumo, unas listas que estamos haciendo, un monitoreo bastante efectivo de todas las redes sociales, de ventas en *Youtube*, en *Spotify*, los primeros lugares de música latina para saber los artistas que se mantienen en las primeras posiciones y seguirles la pista a ellos. La revista tiene de todo mezclado dentro del mismo proyecto. Hay música, hay diseño, hay teatro, hay danza, hay ballet, cine, televisión, hay crónicas, hay algunas críticas socioculturales, aunque no son lo que más nos interesa porque no queremos tener nada que ver con política. Hasta donde más llegamos, es hasta el aspecto sociocultural porque hay cosas que nos llaman la atención. Normalmente nos traen las crónicas los periodistas, las leemos y las ilustramos. La revista está muy premiada de diseño, de colores. Somos comunicadores visuales y sabemos cómo vender un producto. Sabemos que, por ejemplo, tu tesis de doctorado está así muy aburrida le pongo un diseño, lo conceptualizo y seguramente la gente va a ir y le llama la atención, porque para eso están los comunicadores visuales. Entonces, a la revista sabemos darle visualidad para que llegue lo mismo a un graduado de literatura, o que llegue a un doctor, o que llegue a un muchacho que terminó sus estudios en séptimo grado, a un profesor de escuela, a un estudiante de secundaria. Tiene mucho público, abarca muchas ramas de la cultura, y es por eso que rápidamente se ha expandido por todo el país y se ha hecho muy popular.

También, el medio de distribución que tenemos es muy efectivo, que es el paquete de la semana. Y gracias a esto cada edición llega a Cuba en tres días. Ha habido otra cosa también que hemos tenido a nuestro favor, que hemos cubierto ramas de la cultura que nadie nunca se había atrevido a cubrir, como por ejemplo el propio diseño gráfico. Los diseñadores cuelgan publicaciones, pero nadie le ha dedicado nunca un espacio en una publicación, y nosotros tenemos fijo todos los meses dos páginas como mínimo al diseño. En una página, le pedimos a un artista gráfico que diseñe lo que quiera, la única condición es que ponga su contacto. En la otra página, entrevistamos a un diseñador gráfico, o industrial, o escenográfico. Le damos la entrevista a él, y él se diseña su propia página con su entrevista. Es una interacción que tenemos con los diseñadores. Todos los meses tenemos fotografía, todos los meses tenemos teatro, crónica, tenemos algo que nunca se había atrevido a cubrir, que es el reggaetón. Quizá se había hablado de él, pero para echarle tierra. Y el reggaetón es algo muy popular en Cuba, posiblemente la música más popular que hay en Cuba. Sin miedo a equivocarme, hay más seguidores de reggaetón que de cualquier otro género musical. Por eso la revista se expande rápidamente por toda la población. Yo vengo desde que era muy chiquito trabajando desde el medio visual. Para mí fue muy fácil porque conocía ya a muchos artistas, músicos, escritores, de la televisión, porque yo soy realizador visual y llevo tiempo haciendo efectos especiales, diseño gráfico...

Pero tuve suerte de ponerme a trabajar dentro de un equipo de personas que ya estaban establecidas, mi padre también es músico, y eso me abrió las puertas. Si no conocía a alguien él, lo conocía un amigo. Entonces, la revista me daba la posibilidad de volver a retomar esos contactos. Siempre les decía que tenía entre manos un proyecto muy loco.

Fue como que uní todo lo que yo tenía en mi cabeza, ponerlo en un PDF de cien páginas de edición mensual, buscar a personas que conocía que tenía el talento, y yo creo que una de las mejores cosas que tiene la revista es el personal que tiene, la meticulosa selección de cada una de las personas es lo que hace ese proyecto tan interesante. Independientemente de que haya nacido en el contexto en que estamos ahora. Porque hace cinco años, a lo mejor, yo sacaba esta revista y era algo como que, no puedes. Ahora tampoco es que se pueda mucho, pero las mentes están más abiertas y hay posibilidades. Podemos emprender más los fines que queremos siempre que no hablemos de política, siempre que no nos metamos en ningún proyecto interno de la sociedad, del país, y siempre que no digamos mentiras en esta publicación. Porque sí que respetamos mucho la información.

Sara: ¿Cuánto tiempo lleváis con la revista?

RA5: La revista cumple ahora diecisiete meses, es decir, un año y cinco meses. Muchos de los medios tradicionales de Cuba, como *Juventud Rebelde*, *OnCuba* que sé que hay muy buenos profesionales trabajando ahí, nos siguen como si estuviéramos locos, y sacamos cosas que a lo mejor la gente no se esperaba. Y todo viene del equipo creativo: vamos a hacer esto. A veces yo digo, caballeros vamos a hacer esto, los diez mejores tragos con los que la gente se emborracha. Pero, ¿cómo vamos a sacar esa entrevista? No sé, vamos a preguntarle a la gente en los bares, en las cantinas. Llamo a un amigo: ¿tú crees que me puedes hacer una entrevista sobre esto y esto? -Ok. Hacemos la encuesta, le hacemos un gráfico. Ponemos algo así en internet y, a los tres días, quince mil personas lo leyeron o lo compartieron. Ha sido así, hemos tratado siempre de ir un paso por delante. Por ejemplo, sacamos el PDF, y después sacamos una versión para teléfono que es la misma revista, pero diseñada para teléfono. Aquí también hay distintas vías para que tú te puedas descargar la aplicación, que son las tiendas de teléfono. Tú vas allí y gratuitamente te lo instalan. Ahora mismo no está disponible en la Apple Store, pero te la puedes instalar. Usando las posibilidades que hay en Cuba es como hemos ido avanzando. También pusimos la revista en diferentes puntos de wifi locales que hay en la ciudad. La gente se conectaba y decía, coño, la revista, y se la bajaba.

Sara: ¿Podrías explicarme mejor cómo funciona este proceso?

RA5: Aquí tenemos una red local. En tu casa, tu coges con la computadora, haces crear una wifi, y la creas. Si tú eres programador informático, le pones una dirección que es vistar.com. Te conectas a la red local y sale una página, que somos nosotros. Son wifi que hay en los talleres donde arreglan móviles. Los dueños de los negocios se hacen su wifi para que la gente se distraiga mientras le arreglan el móvil. Y ahí se carga la revista. Entonces, son como muchas vías. Después sacamos la revista en inglés y hay mucha gente que se la descarga. El mes pasado tuvo más de diez mil y tantas descargas.

Sara: ¿Tienes información de quién y desde dónde se la descargan?

RA5: Desde dónde me va a ser difícil saberlo, porque yo sólo sé cuánta gente le ha dado al botón de descarga. Fuera de Cuba sí tiene muchísimo impacto, muchísimo impacto. Desde Estados Unidos la ven mucho. Todos los meses hay como ciento diez mil visitas fueron el mes pasado, o sea que, diariamente, debe haber como cinco mil visitas a la web. Además del PDF, también tenemos una página web. Fue lo primero que hicimos para motivarnos más después del PDF. (Comenta sobre una crónica que hicieron ese día, Verdaderos corsarios del siglo 21. No sé si sabes que Cuba es el

único país en el que la piratería es legal. La gente puede quemar sus discos y venderlos, para eso hay una licencia. Entonces, este trabajo va sobre eso).

Sara: Tocáis varios temas tabúes, que los medios nacionales no cubrirían.

RA5: Por ejemplo, en artículos relacionados, hay uno sobre placeres culpables, cuando eres más de leer literatura, no te vas a comprar la revista *Vanitatis* porque sabes que el texto es mierda, pero cuando estás sola igual la lees; otra sobre selfies, otra crónica sobre qué cosa es la farándula cubana).

Sara: ¿Usas las redes sociales para promover tus contenidos?

RA5: Anteayer a las tres de la mañana hablando con un amigo me dice, porque están cogiendo mucho peso en Facebook, cada vez que abro Facebook hay algo sobre la revista. Y apenas tenemos unos cuatro mil seiscientos seguidores (a día 14 de diciembre de 2016, tiene 16.615 seguidores en Facebook). Esto es sin pagar, nunca hemos pagado a Facebook para promocionarnos. Como dice Facebook es como orgánico. Son likes orgánicos. Pero no son muchos, muchos son.... un millón. No tenemos Twitter, pero queremos buscar un especialista

en Twitter que está viviendo en España, pero se vuelve a Cuba a vivir. Yo no sé cómo funciona Twitter realmente. Eso cuando ya la gente tenga internet en el teléfono, va a ser mejor. Me decía mi amigo que la revista es muy popular, que tiene mucha actividad en las redes y yo digo, sí pero no sé por qué ha sido así. Desde hace un mes para acá, ha subido mucho la página, y es porque acababan de abrir el wifi en las calles y hay más acceso. Rápido, se me ocurrió para el mes que viene ir a los puntos wifi con un montón de pegatinas y dárseos a la gente, visita esto. Ahora puedo hacerlo porque los tengo a mano, sé que están aquí en esta calle, o en este parque...

Sara: ¿Vosotros trabajáis con publicidad?

RA5: Nosotros dimos ya un premio una vez, un iPhone. Nadie había hecho eso en Cuba, un iPhone cuesta 500 dólares, pero tenemos patrocinadores en la revista que nos pagan por publicidad y les dije, qué te parece si hacemos un concurso de fotografía y que la gente le haga fotos de tu cerveza con su móvil, y tú nos das un iPhone. La gente mandó más de cinco mil fotos a la cerveza y fue todo un éxito. Hay muchas vías alternativas que estamos utilizando. No de la manera más inteligente, lo sé, no se ha hecho un estudio fiel. Pero si sabes que todo el mundo ahí, no necesito pagar a Facebook para que sea más visible mi página en La Habana. Yo la gente de La Habana ya sé dónde está. Sabes que hay en Cuba una promoción que es como SMS, puedes recibir información sobre fiestas. Tenemos ese servicio, pero nunca nadie ha dicho, este SMS es para la gente de La Habana, o del Vedado...

Sara: ¿Por qué crees que no había nada así en los medios cubanos?

RA5: Somos pioneros, somos totalmente vanguardistas en esto. Hubo gente que hizo revistas. Por ejemplo, hay una revista de una escuela creativa de fotografía, pero es una revista para ellos mismos. Hay otra revista en mi escuela, que se hacía en formato Flash con trabajos de estudiantes. Pero ni siquiera pensé en eso. Yo quería hacer publicidad. Yo he trabajado en publicidad, en *advertisement* fuera de Cuba y es muuuucho dinero. Porque son efectos visuales, y hacer un recortador, que para mí era muy fácil hacerlo. Estuve pensando en la mejor vía para canalizar esa industria, y una revista es la mejor forma de hacerlo. Una revista que me guste a mí tiene que tener diseño, tiene que tener Rock and Roll, una revista que le guste a la gente del paquete de la semana, porque es ahí donde tiene que estar para que todo el mundo la vea, tiene que tener reggaetón; una revista que le guste a mis amigos intelectuales, es decir que tiene que tener trova, que tiene que tener literatura; una revista que le guste a mi papá tiene que tener cine. Tengo muchos amigos y

pensé en una revista que les guste a cada uno de ellos, y eso me inspiró para hacer *Vistar*. Reuní siete personas el primer mes, cada uno de cada sector, y así salió la primera revista. Hasta el día de hoy, se ha estado modificando y siempre va a estar en constante movimiento, en evolución.

Sara: ¿Cuántos periodistas trabajan en la revista?

RA5: Tenemos muchos colaboradores.

Sara: ¿Qué crees que los motiva para trabajar en *Vistar*?

RA5: Les motiva mucho la libertad que tenemos para hacer determinadas cosas. Tenemos

mucha libertad de creación. Esta es la portada de este mes (muestra la portada: 'quisimos dedicar este espacio para agradecer a todas las conexiones Nauta de nuestro país. Ahora todo será más fácil' -ETECSA-... y un reportaje especial en la página 50). Este tipo de cosas, que la gente lo ve y nos ha dicho, - ¡pero ustedes están locos! ¡Cómo ustedes van a poner eso ahí! - ¿Por qué? ¿Te gustó? -Sí, claro. Se trata de eso. Ellos no pagaron por esta promoción ni nada, simplemente les pusimos gracias. Al mismo tiempo es muy irónico porque a mí no me hace gracia ni cojones. Ya es muy tarde para poner eso ahí. No lo pongas solamente ahí, ponlo por todas partes hasta que llegue a Almenares, y ponlo en toda la Habana Vieja, y ponlo en todo el Malecón. Gastas siete millones de dólares y pon una antena enorme en el Hotel Habana Libre, y no sé dónde, y pon internet en todos los teléfonos.

Sara: ¿Y por qué no se pone?

RA5: Ahí ya no.... ahí ya no. Me atrevería a responder, pero creo que no sea la respuesta.

Creo que no lo ponen porque no les da la gana.

Sara: Has comentado que no tratáis temas políticos tal cual, pero ¿crees que el arte y la cultura también pueden ser políticos?

RA5: Sí, hay mucho de política actualmente en la cultura, pero simplemente nos dedicamos a temas culturales. La cuestión política es el por qué, y el por qué no lo explicamos. Por ejemplo, cuando vinieron los Cinco Héroes hicieron un concierto de Silvio Rodríguez en el Latinoamericano. Silvio Rodríguez es uno de los artistas más importantes que tiene Cuba. Fuimos e hicimos fotos allí, pero yo no quise poner la foto de ellos tal cual. Sino que se las di a un amigo que es diseñador gráfico. Le dije: esta es una foto y quiero que me hagas una impresión diferente. Entonces, la noticia la dimos con esa foto. Por si acaso, no quisimos poner la foto tal cual. Han pasado muchas cosas. por ejemplo, todo el fenómeno de Gente de Cuba con bailando, la apertura de relaciones entre Estados Unidos y Cuba, todo eso vino como en el mismo momento y nosotros pusimos nuestro granito de arena. Ha habido muchas cosas que antes pasaban desapercibidas porque no había un medio que se hiciera cargo de ellas, que se preocupara por ellas. Y sin embargo, ahora muchos medios están cubriendo cosas que no cubrían gracias a nosotros, porque nosotros hemos hecho cosas muy populares. Por ejemplo, ayer un amigo mío cantinero que ha ocupado el lugar varios años en competencias de tequila y cosas así me decía: ¿tú sabes que mucha gente me ha dicho que se han visto mucho los eventos? Cuando hay un evento, nosotros vamos y lo cubrimos. Mucha gente lo ha visto, y antes pasaba y nadie se enteraba. Ahora se enteran todo el país, el mundo entero, porque nosotros lo ponemos. Hay gente que igual no lo ve porque no ve la revista, pero el reconocimiento es muy importante. Yo creo que, dadas las circunstancias en este momento, nosotros no estamos listos para hablar de política. Tenemos muchos criterios y muchas inquietudes, porque el cubano es muy político, '¡por culpa de este país, por culpa de este gobierno estamos así!', y es como una costumbre desde que somos chiquitos el buscarle alguna razón en la parte política a todos los

problemas, pero realmente no nos interesa. Creo que mi generación tiene tantas cosas de las que preocuparse, que la política es la última de las prioridades.

Sara: Sí, pero, aunque no hagáis política tal cual, el hecho de centrarse en temas determinados, como el reggaetón, también implica asumir una postura política.

RA5: No, es simplemente es no tener temor a decir lo que pienses. A mucha de la gente dentro del equipo creativo no les gusta el reggaetón, a mí no me gusta el reggaetón, pero sé que es muy popular, la gente de la calle está todo el tiempo con el reggaetón, y hay veces que le digo a la gente que graba las entrevistas, esta revista no la estás haciendo para ti, la estás haciendo para mí, para él, para él. No es tu punto de vista el que tiene que prevalecer. Que a ti no te guste, no quiere decir que no esté bien.

Sara: ¿Os han acusado de ser banales, de ser capitalistas?

RA5: ¡Uh! Banales, banales. Capitalistas nadie se ha atrevido a decirlo porque sería como ponernos una Estrella Michelin. Y realmente, lo somos, porque la revista es muy democrática, todo el mundo tiene voto. Pero sí nos han acusado mucho de banales. Respondemos ignorándolos, y nunca hemos ni siquiera hablado... Yo tengo un criterio muy personal, porque yo vengo de un mundo muy particular, me considero un artista gráfico visual. Lo banal es subjetivo. Porque que a ti no te guste esto, no quiere decir que eso sea banal. Sin embargo, hay mucha gente que pasa por alto lo que a ti te gusta, y va a buscar eso. Lo banal es subjetivo. Tú no puedes decir este diseño es una mierda, tú puedes decir que no te gusta, porque yo respeto tu criterio, pero no puedes decir que es una mierda. Eso depende de quién lo diga. Por ejemplo, hay personas que nos han acusado de ser banales, pero esas personas, para empezar, tienen más de 50 años. Ya por ahí, yo no voy a discutir con ellos. Tú tienes más de 50 años, y yo tengo solamente 28. Me da hasta roña que me digas que es algo banal. Entonces, hay gente en la calle, la mayoría de la gente que me escribe, que lo que piden es eso a lo que llaman banal. Y estamos trabajando para un público, para una audiencia, para gente que nos sigue. No estamos trabajando para intelectuales.

Sara: Esa es una idea rompedora en Cuba, el decir que vuestra visión depende del criterio del público, algo que no suele pasar en el resto de medios cubanos.

RA5: Claro, nosotros nos nutrimos de ese criterio, de lo que la gente de la calle nos dice que le gusta. La gente escribe muchos correos. Por ejemplo, este es el correo de la revista (enseña uno de los emails). Por ejemplo, tenemos una sección en la revista que se llama Fotos de Farándula. Esta sección es una de las maneras que tenemos de retroalimentarnos con la gente, porque la gente manda fotos con famosos y luego va a buscar si salieron en la revista. Y hay gente que escribe llorando, diciendo que ha enviado la foto hace cuatro meses y nunca la han puesto. Y es que nos mandan cientos de fotos, y apenas estamos publicando unas 50 fotos. Tenemos la esperanza de sacarla impresa, porque impresa va a ser muy diferente.

Sara: ¿Qué se necesitaría, para sacarla impresa?

RA5: Estamos en trámite de una corresponsalía. Siendo un medio independiente en Cuba, nos ha costado mucho sudor y muchas neuronas, porque viabilizar el proyecto como tal, legalizarlo, ha sido un problema. Porque no basta con ser independiente, lo independiente suena exótico, pero hace falta como una base legal para tener una editorial, para tú poder publicar la revista. Entonces, pusimos el proyecto en República Dominicana, en una casa editorial, y a través de República Dominicana estamos pidiendo permiso al CPI. Es como que imposible ahora mismo editarla desde aquí. Hay una propuesta de hacer una propuesta de proyecto ley, pero eso va a tomar y tiempo, y yo quisiera imprimir la revista, quisiera verla impresa, quisiera que todo el mundo pudiera verla porque sé que hay gente que no tiene tiempo de sentarse delante de una computadora. Por eso hicimos la

versión móvil. Yo quisiera venderla en todas partes, en todos los estancillos que venden revistas, en los hoteles. Quisiera venderla en divisas porque creo que es un proyecto que hay que respetar. Es decir, si tú quieres ir a ver Habana de Primera tienes que pagar en CUC, y la revista *Vistar* por todo su diseño, también. Si la gente paga 3 pesos por conectarse en Internet.

Sara: Dos.

RA5: Bueno, tú pagas dos porque haces cola. Pero la gente la revende por tres. Si yo puedo vender la revista por dos CUC, la pueden ver cien. En Cuba hay mucho dinero, aunque no lo parezca.

Sara: *Vistar* desafía un poco algunas virtudes de la prensa institucional, como el no dedicar espacio a la farándula, y no aceptar publicidad.

RA5: ¿Y tú crees que eso es una virtud? ¿Tú quieres saber por qué se vanaglorian de eso? Porque no les dejan hacer ni publicidad, ni hablar de lo que a la gente realmente le interesa. Vale que *Granma*, a lo mejor, no hable de farándula ni de cotilleo, pero *Granma* es el principal periódico de Cuba y es en blanco y negro. ¿No es hora de que lo saquen a color? Pero, ¿con qué ingresos? No quieren poner publicidad, pero podrían sacar un periódico que hable de cotilleo y con publicidad. Haz un medio que te genere ingresos, porque con esos ingresos, tú pagas una impresora a color, y sacas *Granma* bien grande a color y que la gente se lo lea con gusto. Porque un periódico en 2015 a color, eso no existe en ninguna parte. La prensa cubana es un desastre, y eso que ellos dicen que es una virtud, ahora mismo para ellos es un gran defecto para mí, incluso que piensen así. La prensa cubana y la televisión cubana tienen que tener publicidad para que generen ingresos, porque te gastas miles de dólares día a día. Todos los negocios privados que han abierto, esas personas pueden pagarte un anuncio y hay mucha inversión extranjera que te puede pagar un anuncio. Y con un simple anuncio, puedes comprar una impresora a color y hacer un periódico mejor. La televisión cubana es una mierda porque no tiene publicidad. No tienen identidad ahora mismo, no hay identidad porque todo lo que sale en la televisión cubana está cogido de otros lugares. Lo sacan hasta del paquete de la semana y lo ponen ahí. No hay presupuesto para tener identidad. Si tú tomas diez diseñadores y les dices, mira, aquí tienes el canal *Cubavisión*. Necesito que todo el canal *Cubavisión* tenga la misma identidad visual. Para eso hace falta, no un cheque de 80 CUC, para eso yo les voy a dar a ustedes quince mil CUC. Que quince mil CUC, te digo más, sería como un día de publicidad en la televisión. Con ese dinero, los diseñadores hacen una identidad para todo el canal. No es la **solución**, pero ya empiezas con la solución. Después, con el ingreso de publicidad, coges otro presupuesto y haces un set bonito, poco a poco así vas creando una identidad que no tienes ahora mismo.

Sara: ¿Crees que los medios estatales han tomado al público por contado, y no se han esforzado por atraer a la audiencia?

RA5: Claro, ¿si no hay más ná? Por eso le han hecho la guerra al paquete de la semana. Porque, ¿quién ve la televisión actualmente? Los viejos, los de más de cincuenta años. Ese tema, personalmente, me insulta mucho. La televisión la ven los viejos, o los niños pequeños. Pero mucha gente, ahora mismo, no ve televisión. Porque ponen su disco duro en la televisión y pueden ver películas, o la gente que tiene antenas. Pero la televisión cubana ahora mismo son cuatro canales, creo que hay cuatro canales ahora mismo, o cinco, no sé porque no veo la televisión. Pero ya, o ves eso, o no ves nada.

Sara: ¿Qué te parece *Telesur*?

RA5: *Telesur* es el canal más popular de la televisión cubana porque está bonito. ¿Por qué funciona *Vistar*? Porque está bonita, además del contenido. En *Telesur* también está bonito, hay 3D y

brillitos, hay iluminación, hay un mundo diferente dentro de ese set. Incluso a las mismas personas que hacían televisión en Cuba se las llevaron para allí. La información es la misma, además.

Sara: Dos de los problemas de los medios tradicionales son la pérdida de lectores, y la pérdida de periodistas. ¿Qué les aconsejarías?

RA5: Los colaboradores periodistas que trabajan en *Vistar*, todos pertenecen a medios institucionales. Lo que hacen es colaborar con nosotros. Hasta ahora no les ha causado ningún conflicto en sus lugares de trabajo, y ojalá no pase nada porque creo que se puede hacer. No hay ningún motivo por el que no puedan colaborar con *Vistar*. Si les dicen - ¡Ya no vas a trabajar más con *Vistar*! Les van a decir que se quedan con *Vistar*, porque aquí se les paga más, pueden hacer cosas que no pueden hacer allí. Allí tienen que hablar de política y de cosas de las que no les gusta hablar, mientras que aquí pueden hablar de lo que les gusta. El hecho no es crear una competencia ni una discordia. Pueden trabajar en los dos, en *Vistar* y en *Granma* si quieren. Mi consejo para los medios cubanos es que se abran a las nuevas propuestas, a las nuevas tecnologías, y que inviertan en calidad de imagen, que inviertan dinero en eso, que pongan publicidad. La publicidad es importante para las publicaciones porque te refresca la vista. Lo que pasa es que en Cuba hay que ver qué publicidad tú pones porque se supone que la gente tampoco tiene los ingresos para comprarse un Smartphone. Pero en cualquier otro país, si eres un tipo al que le gusta leer sobre política, eres un tipo serio, y si eres un hombre serio te gustaría conducir un coche serio. Creo que si se abren a la publicidad van a tener ingresos que les van a ser muy útiles para emprender nuevos proyectos.

Sara: ¿Crees que el proyecto *Vistar* puede entrar en contradicción con ciertos valores revolucionarios?

RA5: ¿Quieres que te diga una cosa? Nosotros dimos un gran paso aquí en Cuba, fuimos muy atrevidos con lo que hicimos y ni yo mismo sabía la magnitud de lo que estábamos haciendo. Nosotros le quitamos la telaraña a la publicidad en Cuba. Hubo un tiempo en Cuba en los 90 en que se permitió publicidad, pero eso se eliminó. Y ya no se hacía publicidad en Cuba. Nosotros comenzamos a hacer una publicidad sobre cualquier cosa, un bar, por ejemplo. Fue un salto en publicidad en Cuba, e incluso han surgido otras revistas en PDF. Y por la manera en que hemos la publicidad, no tenemos competencia en eso porque somos siete diseñadores, cuatro fotógrafos pensando todo el día en eso y es como trampa. Es como si tu jugaras al fútbol cuatro personas contra once. La visualidad que le damos a la publicidad es muy distinta a la que le dan los demás. El mismo Estado ha abierto medios, periódicos, tabloides, donde han puesto publicidad a negocios particulares. Destapamos un baúl de telarañas y ahora los mismos medios del Estado están haciendo publicidad. Y me siento muy bien por haber sido los primeros, sin miedos, sin temores. Como no sabía a lo que me estaba enfrentando, lo hice así, como un niño que se mete en la boca del lobo, y no sabe que es la boca del lobo. Yo pensaba, no me van a matar, no me voy a morir por esto. Lo mejor es intentarlo, vamos para delante. Es mi generación. *Vistar* es más bien el reflejo de una generación, de la mía hacia abajo, y unos cuatro o cinco años hacia arriba. Incluso, la gente del equipo creativo somos así, gente de 23 a 32 años. Yo creo que mi generación tiene una gran tarea, que es rescatar tantos años que se han perdido de la cultura, tantos años grises, sin colores, en blanco y negro, como el *Granma*. Creo que es el momento de darle alegría a los corazones, destapar todo lo que pasó y se acabó el bloqueo, hay revistas de farándula... Se acabó el bloqueo, estamos en la línea amarilla. Había un bloqueo económico, pero eso se va a acabar ya. No es posible que pueda seguir. ¿Sabes por qué? Porque Cuba está en una posición geográfica determinada. Ha durado muchísimos años, pero no es por ellos, es por nosotros, por la gente que dirige este país. Eso le interesa solamente a tres o cuatro viejitos que viven en La Florida. Si se levanta el bloqueo, les va a convenir más (económicamente). Yo creo que estamos en la línea amarilla.

RD6

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Sara: ¿Cuáles son las principales virtudes y las principales deficiencias de la prensa en Cuba?

RD6: Yo percibo que lo que podríamos llamar el discurso económico y la acción económica están muy por delante de su lógico acompañante, que sería la prensa. Es decir, la economía en Cuba, la transformación económica, la ‘actualización’, la reforma, como quieras llamarle (es lo mismo), va despaciosamente, pero va siguiendo un proyecto que está cambiando incluso ideas que durante muchos años se prohibieron. En este país, hablar por ejemplo de propiedad privada hasta hace unos años era algo impensable. La pequeña burguesía se descabezó en este país en 1968, lo que quedaba de ella. Claro, ese es un error que pagamos muy caro. Se descabezó con un discurso.

Hoy, si usted se da cuenta y renuncia a la terminología oficial, para nombrarla como la teoría lo pide, usted sabe que en Cuba se está creando, se está refundando una pequeña burguesía propia de la etapa de tránsito del socialismo. Cuba ha recuperado, a mi juicio la etapa de tránsito. Y esa etapa de tránsito no se puede hacer sin la pequeña burguesía, que es uno de los factores que puede incrementar las fuerzas productivas y una serie de actividades que tanto inciden en la vida cotidiana de los cubanos. Ahora, así va nuestra economía. La ley de inversiones extranjeras es amplísima, comparándola con la de los noventa. Va mucho más adelante. En la agricultura, más de un millón de hectáreas de tierra han sido entregadas en usufructo a personas privadas. En el sector cooperativo, la constitución cubana prohibía la cooperativa en otro lugar que no fuera la agricultura. Ahora, [existe] en todos los sectores, prácticamente. Claro, la Constitución tiene que ser reformulada y hay una comisión para eso, pero no puedes esperar para cambiar las cosas a que los padres de la Constitución se pongan de acuerdo. ¿Estás violando un artículo? O violas el artículo, o te mueres. El artículo no deja de ser un artículo que se puede corregir, que se puede quitar, que se puede cambiar. La Constitución prohibía eso. Hoy, la cooperativización pueda haberla en todos los sectores. Teníamos un concepto demasiado rígido de lo que era la propiedad. La propiedad cooperativa es propiedad socialista también, aunque no es propiedad estatal.

Aquí confundimos propiedad socialista con propiedad estatal. ¿Cuál es el defecto de nuestra propiedad estatal? Que no se socializó. Yo se lo decía el otro día a un grupo de compañeros en una reunión donde me invitaron. Les decía: los ferrocarriles italianos son estatales, pero no son socialistas porque no están socializados. Ahora, el estado los administra y, contrariamente a lo que nos pasa a nosotros, lo mejor que tiene Italia son los ferrocarriles. Dicen personas que viven allí, entre ellos mi hijo, que trabajó incluso en esos ferrocarriles como asesor, que es lo único que funciona bien. Cuando un tren se atrasa un segundo, ya se está averiguando por qué. Todo eso va cambiando, va modificándose. Dicen que espaciosamente, pero creo que no, que va más rápido de lo que podía imaginarse.

El discurso de nuestra prensa va muy rezagado respecto a la transformación objetiva de la sociedad. La prensa responde mucho a lo subjetivo. No sólo se sabe por una ley dialéctica, sino por una práctica que se ha vivido. Es más fácil destruir un edificio y hacer uno nuevo, que el que yo entienda por qué quitarlo. Lo subjetivo se demora mucho más, va muy retrasado: esa ley del retraso de la conciencia social respecto a la realidad. La prensa va muy detrás de las transformaciones. La

prensa no está acompañando a las transformaciones. La prensa no está representando los conflictos y los problemas que la propia transformación genera en nuestro país. La prensa, incluso, no está sirviendo de vigía, de alerta ante las distorsiones y las desviaciones que esa misma transformación adopta por momentos en algún lugar de este país. Es decir, se cumple la ley. Se legisla, se aprueba, se pone en práctica, pero eso no quiere decir que se cumpla exactamente tal y como se hizo.

Hay zonas donde la ley se distorsiona, hay zonas donde la burocracia municipal dice: - 'No, esto es muy trabajoso, vamos a acomodarla'. Y te acomodan la ley. Y como el Palacio de la Revolución está a centenares de kilómetros de la casita que sirve de sede al gobierno y al partido del municipio, el palacio de la Revolución nunca se va a enterar de que en ese lugar han acomodado la ley. La gente ve que nada cambia porque la ley ha sido distorsionada. Ha sido aplicada de modo que la burocracia local no pase trabajo. Y eso lo sabe el gobierno, lo sabe el Partido. Ahora, la prensa podría ser un factor de pelea contra esas manifestaciones, pero el discurso de la prensa sigue detrás, confundiendo algo que no se puede confundir: prensa y propaganda.

Hoy por hoy, el discurso de estos periódicos es netamente propagandístico. Yo, que soy profesor de la Facultad durante muchos años, le planteo a mis alumnos que escriban planteando conflictos, porque si no planteamos conflictos hacemos propaganda; conflictos que no tienen que ser antagónicos, que dañen a la sociedad o que se opongan a las tendencias fundamentales de la sociedad, pero escribamos planteando conflictos. Si voy a elogiar el color rojo, comienzo diciendo que algunos prefieren el azul y ya estoy planteando el conflicto, y no estoy contra el color rojo. Sencillamente, estoy haciendo interesante lo que estoy escribiendo, porque estoy conflictivizando, porque si en las páginas de un periódico no hay conflictos, usted no lo lee. Ya yo lo leí en Internet, no leí nada, sólo los titulares, y todo es buena postura y hago lo que se dice. Estamos haciendo una prensa propagandística. Usted misma no necesita que se lo repita, usted que es experta lo sabe. ¿Por qué pasa? Ese es el asunto.

Sara: Lo que me extraña mucho es que entre los periodistas y entre los profesores de la Facultad he visto ganas de hacer otro periodismo, pero eso choca con la práctica.

RD6: Porque el problema, ¿dónde lo ponemos? ¿Dentro o fuera del periódico? La respuesta que usted le dé a esa pregunta es lo que le va a decir qué está pasando. El problema de la mala prensa, ¿es dentro de la prensa o es fuera de la prensa? Yo, que entre las palabras del idioma prefiero como las más bellas tres o cuatro, entre esas hay una que la he convertido en un principio: equilibrio. Para ser equilibrado, que es la mejor manera de ser periodista, yo le digo a usted que el problema está en los dos lugares. Por mucho que usted se esfuerce en la Facultad de Periodismo enseñando una aptitud, después usted se da cuenta cuando sigue al periodista que vio en cuarto año, y usted lo ve después, usted se da cuenta que se ha acomodado a un carril que no es el carril que usted le enseñó. O porque no han sabido resistir la fuerza del ambiente, las ideas predominantes sobre la prensa, y se han plegado a ellas, o porque en la práctica no son tan buenos como yo pensaba.

Ahora, los que eran buenos de verdad... Yo estuve años en la Facultad, en el Departamento de Periodismo, y tuve cursos de cuarenta alumnos, porque había una explosión en la matrícula. De esos cuarenta, a las dos semanas ya yo sabía quién era y quién no era. De esos cuarenta alumnos, cinco, seis o siete eran los que iban a ser periodistas. Más o menos se aproxima a un 20%, pero no me fallaba, nunca me falló. Esos son los que usted lee hoy con agrado, con gusto, porque no hacen lo mismo que los demás, sino que tratan de hacer las cosas como las hace un periodista. Un periodista es un hombre que está para despertar interés, y la mejor manera de despertar interés en el lector es planteando las cosas problemáticamente, aunque sea a favor de las cosas.

Aunque yo defienda la Revolución cubana, aunque defienda la sociedad cubana, tengo que hablar de ella problemáticamente para poder tener alguna certeza de que podré ser leído y meditado, por ahí es el camino. Nuestra prensa ya sabemos lo que hace como propaganda. Por ejemplo, usted lee

las crónicas de las muchachitas jóvenes de *Juventud Rebelde*, usted me perdona pero fui su profesor y puedo decírselo, usted ve que esas crónicas son ñoñerías. Ahora usted lee una crónica de RD10 y te das cuenta que ahí hay un profesional o lee una de Arencibia, uno de mis alumnos de los más brillantes y te das cuenta que hay un profesional, le puedo mencionar algunos más pero no son muchos. Eso es esa media que a veces tiene la cara bonita, por eso vas para la televisión y se convierten famosos por la cara, porque no dicen nada, pero son famosos. No se meten en un problema, no dicen algo que escandalice o que ponga al televidente en ascuas.

El problema está dentro, porque hay falta de profesionalidad en el cuerpo de redacción y en los editores. Hay buenos editores, pero hay muy malos editores. En *Juventud Rebelde* hay un muy buen editor, RC16, un periodista entero, respetado, con ideas propias, con ideas que es capaz de defender escribiendo o hablando. Hay problemas profesionales en la redacción con un grupo de periodistas, y hay problemas con los editores, que no saben qué hacer porque, además, como periodistas nunca fueron brillantes. Yo después le diré otras cosas que tiene que saber, para que usted vea que siempre no fue igual. En este caso, a pesar de que tenemos un ayer mejor que el hoy, el hoy le da la espalda al ayer.

La otra parte de responsabilidad en el papel de la prensa son las fuerzas exógenas que controlan a la prensa. La prensa está, por supuesto, políticamente ligada al programa del partido y al aparato ideológico del partido. ¿Qué está pasando? Por un lado, ese aparato ideológico tiene momentos que va adelante y hacia atrás. ¿Por qué hacia adelante y hacia atrás? Porque tenemos que tener en cuenta que el aparato estatal y el aparato administrativo, dígame directores de organismos importantes, le tienen terror al papel de la prensa. Entonces, hoy por hoy es más evidente esa resistencia a que la prensa sea capaz de decir lo que está bien, pero también lo que está mal. Le tienen terror a la prensa, por eso es difícil que un ministro dé una entrevista o se rebaje a dar una conferencia de prensa. Le tienen terror a las preguntas. Ese terror sale del propio terror de que yo no quiero que conozcan públicamente mis errores. Toda crítica es una ofensa de segundo grado. Cuando criticas a alguien, el criticado se siente ofendido gravemente, profundamente, porque prácticamente criticar es desnudar, y a nadie le gusta que lo desnuden. Ese problema ha existido en nuestra sociedad durante muchos años, pero ahora ha cobrado una fuerza inusitada, una fuerza que no reconozco. Comencé en el periodismo en el año 72, hace cuarenta y dos años. Conozco el periodismo de este país y no me puedo quejar.

Le puedo decir que he sido uno de los periodistas privilegiados de este país porque me han dejado hacer y decir. Nadie me lo ha impedido, pero hay también un secreto como le dije ahorita: soy un periodista equilibrado. Cuando critico, no arremeto; analizo. Incluso, como diría Martí, en lo que está malo puede haber algo bueno, y no se puede pasar por alto. Yo estoy convencido (y eso sin vanidad, porque la vanidad es el enemigo del oficio) ... Sin vanidad puedo decirle que fui el primer periodista que en este país escribió contra la corrupción en el año 90. En el año 90 trabajaba en la revista *Bohemia*, que es una de las principales del país con más de cien años de existencia, y tenía una sección. Y dije que en Cuba los ministros no podían tener tres casas, tres carros y tres mujeres, ni sus hijos asomarse al balcón con una latica de Coca-Cola, como los estaba viendo, porque empezaba el 'Período Especial', la escasez, la pobreza. El que tenía, tenía, pero no lo muestres porque eres el hijo del ministro. Eso lo dije yo porque me lo dejaron decir, nadie me regañó. Hubo algún ministro que se puso bravo, pero puedo tener problemas con un ministro, y eso lo resuelvo personalmente con el ministro. Pero no puedo tener problemas con el organismo que representa lo que pienso y creo, que sería el Partido. No protestó ni me regañó, por eso le digo que no estoy sangrando por una herida.

Estoy tratando de ver las cosas en su desarrollo, o en su retraso, porque yo he sido un periodista feliz. Quizás no muy bien pagado, pero sí me han dejado trabajar. He podido hacer lo que me he propuesto desde esa perspectiva del equilibrio, ese es el espíritu martiano. Mire usted, por una parte, interiormente la desprofesionalización. No porque tenga muchos graduados en una redacción

indica que la redacción está profesionalizada, y como los veteranos se han ido, entras a un periódico y lo que ves son caras jóvenes.

Cuando entré al periodismo, encontré en esa década de los años setenta lo mismo que en otras partes. En la sociedad deben existir tres generaciones ligadas: la que empieza a formarse, la que está en la madurez, y la que está terminando. Esas tres generaciones, al coincidir, se alimentan mutuamente. Sobre todo, la que está empezando recibe la influencia de la que está en madurez; la que está en madurez recibe influencia de la generación que ya termina, y siempre va quedando la tradición. El periodismo es como la medicina, que es pura tradición, y un médico de hoy tiene en cuenta lo que descubrió fulano de tal en el año uno. Se acuerda de eso porque lo leyó y sabe que el cubano Albarrán fue el urólogo más famoso del mundo en la época, y que los libros de Albarrán no han perdido vigencia y que hay que ir a Albarrán cuando hay un problema renal muy difícil. Hay que ir a ver qué dice él que yo no haya sabido. El periodismo es igual: ¿cómo lo hacía hace cuarenta años Enrique de la Osa, ¿cómo la hacía Onelio Jorge o tantos otros que conocí cuando llegué a la redacción? Para nosotros era un orgullo trabajar con ellos, y eso se ha perdido. Y en *Granma* pasa lo mismo.

Sara: Me hablaron de un vacío generacional, que había periodistas muy jóvenes y ya mayores, pero que hubo una generación intermedia que fue abandonando el periodismo y dedicándose a otros campos.

RD6: Que me perdone quien te dijo eso, pero es una respuesta incompleta. No existe casi la generación madura, y la vieja casi desapareció. En primer lugar, porque hubo un momento con tendencias en este país anti-viejos; creyeron que los jóvenes lo resolverían todo nada más por ser jóvenes. En *Juventud Rebelde*, que son todos muchachos salvo RC16, les puede preguntar algo. A Juana Carrasco, que es una de las viejas, creo que es la única de las viejas, porque los demás son jóvenes. Entonces, lees el periódico y te das cuenta de los problemas técnicos, y la mitad de lo que se publica no lo publicaría si fuera jefe de redacción o de información, que una vez lo fui. [Ejemplo, minuto 29.18].

Sara: ¿Dónde están esas generaciones maduras?

RD6: ¿Dónde estoy yo? Escribiendo mis libros, porque además me jubilé a los sesenta años. Cumplí sesenta años el 2 de julio del 2005, y el 30 de junio me fui del periódico. Subí y se lo dije a la jefa de personal. Entonces teníamos a un director que hoy es el embajador de Cuba en Venezuela; ese hombre al que respeto y admiro era director. Yo no lo consulté con él, porque si la ley me da el derecho, ¿quién me puede detener? Cuando él se entera, me llama y me pregunta. Yo tenía entonces dos secciones a la semana, entre ellas una crónica documental que se llamaba ‘Crónica en primera persona’. Eran dos entregas semanales que me llevaban tiempo, porque era pensar. Me dice que no lo podía dejar solo. Me pidió que siguiera como colaborador haciendo la sección del periódico. Ese es un director. Estuve haciéndola hasta que cumplió la sección diez años, porque llega un momento que, de tanto tiempo, te comienzas a repetir. Cuando vi que la sección había cumplido su cometido, que era defender, hablar de las necesidades del cambio, cuando comienza a transformarse el país, ya la sección cesa. (Ejemplo, 34.10).

Resumiendo: Faltan profesionales porque el relevo generacional ha sido erróneo, nadie se preocupó por el relevo. Potenciaron a los jóvenes y se olvidaron de que las generaciones dependen unas de otras. Por otra parte, está la resistencia del aparato estatal a una prensa más transparente, más incisiva, más crítica. Además, se escuda esa actitud en aquello de que hay que tener cuidado porque el enemigo está ahí y no puede saber esto, y no puede saber aquello. Eso nos hace daño, eso lacera la imagen del ministerio y de la empresa, esos son los subterfugios, los sofismos que se emplean para resisitirse a la prensa.

Eso ha mejorado ahora, pero hace diez años, para usted poder entrar a una escuela, había que pedirle permiso al Ministro de Educación. Si usted entra a hacer un trabajo en una escuela, porque hasta eso te lo controlaban. Nos dábamos cuenta de que la educación estaba mala, después tenía que venir Fidel y decirlo, pero la prensa no puede enterarse. O grandes fábricas, y hay que pedirle permiso al ministro. Esa es la resistencia. Entonces, el aparato político del Partido, el aparato ideológico, se encuentra tirado por diversas fuerzas. No voy a defender a esos compañeros. A nuestro país siempre le ha preocupado algo que se ha convertido en una especie de comodín para justificar la pasividad, que es que la unidad nacional no puede sufrir. Si un ministro se pone bravo porque apareció la crítica en un periódico, para muchos eso pone en peligro la unidad nacional. No, si el ministro se pone bravo y pone en peligro la unidad nacional con su bravura, lo boto, lo pongo de peón de vía en un azucarero y se resolvió el problema, el ministro deja de ser ministro. Más rompe la unidad nacional la corrupción, y sin embargo ya hablamos de corrupción y la gente no le tiene miedo a la palabra. Sí hay corrupción, porque en el noventa hablé de ella y todo el mundo lo confirmó, pero no existía la contraloría.

Eso es nuevo, lo creó Raúl y hay una cárcel para corruptos. La prensa tiene que desempeñar un papel en esa batalla. La contraloría no puede tener un detective en cada esquina, y la prensa no solo es un instrumento del Partido; es también un instrumento de la ética nacional, de la unidad nacional, pero la unidad nacional no puede ser la de los corruptos, o la de los que se opongan a las leyes más elementales. Esa sería una unidad falsa. Pero todo eso está metido en ese litigio que no acabamos de resolver, y algunos compañeros que tienen la tarea de dirigir esto no acaban de entender cuál es el papel de la prensa.

Sara: Eso es lo que he escuchado, que no se acaba de entender cuál es el papel de la prensa en una sociedad socialista como la cubana.

RD6: No la acaban de entender. Al menos en los últimos años, porque tengo que decirlo como

lo he dicho en el lugar donde hay que decirlo: delante de esos compañeros que son muy respetables y abnegados. Bueno, estamos preocupados todos porque nuestra prensa no es buena, ustedes y yo estoy convencido de que no es buena, pero debemos mejorarla. El único sector que para hacer avanzar a este país no necesita caminar hacia adelante es la prensa. ¿Cómo es eso? Propóngase hacer la prensa revolucionaria que hubo en los años setenta y ochenta y usted se dará cuenta de que tendrá una buena prensa. Por eso digo que, para cambiar la prensa cubana, no es necesario ir hacia adelante, sino hacia atrás. El único sector de la sociedad cubana que no necesita leyes que lo hagan avanzar, sino la voluntad de volver al mejor momento de la prensa cubana, que fueron las décadas del setenta y del ochenta.

Sara: Pero durante el '*Quinquenio Gris*' algunos intelectuales fueron reprimidos, ¿verdad?

RD6: Pero incluso eso del '*Quinquenio Gris*', algunas personas lo han tomado como un slogan, han tratado de usarlo para su beneficio. Te lo digo, con toda responsabilidad, a título de ex perseguido o ex limitado, muchos hoy sobre todo en el sector de la cultura están viviendo muy bien. A algunas personas se les fue la mano; algunos funcionarios creyeron que la unidad del país necesitaba que todas las cosas funcionaran en el mismo tono, pero no recuerdo que eso fuera así. El '*Quinquenio Gris*' se enmarca en la década del setenta. Después sobre todo del congreso Nacional de Educación y Cultura, donde todos los que estaban allí eran unos cuantos centenares de personas, sobre todo personalidades de la cultura, aprobaron las cosas que se presentaron. Fue muy mala, por ejemplo, la guerra contra los homosexuales en nombre de una decencia ética. Hoy por hoy ya nos damos cuenta de que si aquellos delegados se sientan hoy a reunir los que en Cuba son gays se quedarían fríos, porque tienen incluso hasta un organismo que los defiende, los protege y la hija del presidente es quien los defiende. Aquello fue un error de una etapa izquierdizante que hubo en este país, pero sí,

‘*Quinquenio Gris*’ hubo, incluso de índole política con algunos intelectuales. Sí, hubo una mezcla de asuntos.

Hay un libro por ahí que se acaba de publicar que se llama ‘El año 71’ que lo escribió Jorge Fornet, hijo de Ambrosio Fornet, un gran ensayista. El hijo trabaja en Casa de las Américas, que es un texto sobre ese llamado ‘*Quinquenio Gris*’ y su comienzo, que fue en el año 71. Lo leí y quedé muy satisfecho. Un panorama general. Hubo cosas aborrecibles, muy mal hechas. Tendencias que se impusieron y que afortunadamente no duraron más de cinco años. Alguien enseguida se dio cuenta y rectificaron. Había mucha gente mediadora, mucha gente conflictiva. Había un movimiento de intelectualidad contra la Revolución. Eran años difíciles. Yo no estoy contra eso, estoy contra la discriminación, pero me gusta ver las cosas un tanto equilibradamente. Hay que buscar ese equilibrio. Ese libro busca ese equilibrio.

En los setenta la prensa era distinta. Yo comencé en el ‘72, casi con el ‘*Quinquenio Gris*’, pero la prensa no tuvo esas limitaciones. Comencé en una revista deportiva y parece un tema inofensivo, pero en Cuba el deporte no es un tema inofensivo. Mi aprendizaje inicial fue ahí, en una revista deportiva, ahí comencé a defender mi criterio. Por ejemplo, en este país era un crimen hablar en yo, teníamos que decir nosotros. Yo me daba cuenta de que el periodista es un ser único e intransferible; es él, con su talento y con lo que sabe, y no tiene por qué mezclar a los demás. Esa era la modestia revolucionaria, porque el izquierdismo le hizo mucho daño a este país, las posiciones extremas de este país. En algún momento fue un país de posiciones extremas y lo justifico, porque ese país que está en frente se ha pasado toda la vida molestando a éste. Este país era de ellos fundamentalmente, y cuando lo perdieron no han dejado un minuto de molestar. Hubo tiempos en que molestaron más, y en que amenazaron más, y fue más difícil la situación; por lo tanto, esas cosas tenían respuestas. Cuando ellos apretaban, había una contracción interna. Las posiciones extremas eran muy habituales y justificadas aparentemente por el peligro de los americanos, que siempre han sido un peligro, aunque no lo voy a magnificar. Una de las pocas causas que nos quedan es este retorno a la etapa de tránsito, porque dimos por conseguido un socialismo que nunca fue porque además era falso, porque el socialismo soviético era falso.

Hoy nadie lo quiere decir, pero Raúl lo que está haciendo es una etapa de tránsito para ver cuándo nosotros podemos hacer un socialismo que sea de verdad próspero y sustentable, justo y democrático. Pero hace falta una etapa de tránsito, crear una economía que no existe, porque si el socialismo quiere repartir justamente necesita tener de qué repartir. Por lo tanto, justicia que no reparte no es justicia. Ha sido un país inestable, de posiciones abiertas, de posiciones que después se cierran porque todo estaba condicionado por la política de los Estados Unidos. Ese ha sido el gran éxito de los Estados Unidos. Ellos quizás no han entrado aquí porque no han querido hacerlo por la fuerza, porque no han querido declarar una guerra, porque ante el mundo es algo improcedente. Sin embargo, esos cincuenta y cinco años de acoso, de guerras, de negaciones, han hecho que la vida de este país sea un zigzag y que se hayan generado posiciones extremas. Y que esas posiciones extremas en algún momento hayan perdurado.

Cuando entro al periodismo no se puede decir ‘yo’, y yo lo decía y tenía bronca, pero yo decía ‘yo’. La modestia era una preocupación de todo el mundo. Chico, yo creo que más inmodesto que decir yo creo es decir ‘nosotros creemos’, porque estoy presuponiendo que los demás están de acuerdo conmigo. Eso sí es inmodesto, porque no tengo por qué creer que los demás piensan como yo. Empecé bronqueando. Yo escribo en ‘yo’ en los géneros en que se puede: una crónica, un artículo, hasta un reportaje. Soy personaje de esa historia, y el que no lo sea hace un mal trabajo [ruido, verificar].

Esa ha sido mi escuela, que es la escuela de los mejores. No soy el mejor, pero he tratado de aprender de los mejores. Vemos que en Cuba todo se mezcla: el extremista con el equilibrado, las negaciones, el uso de la seguridad nacional para mantener a la prensa en un estado subalterno. No

siempre hubo una mala prensa; sobre todo en la década de los ochenta, que fue muy buena. Tengo años suficientes para contar qué fue la prensa cubana antes del noventa. Cuando usted lee el periódico *Trabajadores*, en los ochenta se hizo diario. Había cosas. Estaba mal impresa, las máquinas eran muy viejas, rotativas viejas que tenían cincuenta o sesenta años, pero lo importante era lo que se decía, y decíamos cosas. La fuerza que tenía un periodista.

Sara: Quería preguntarle cómo fue la cobertura periodística durante los noventa.

RD6: Si caben cinco noticias en nacional y dos son asuntos prioritarios para el Partido, no se puede poner todo. Los periodistas que han hecho un esfuerzo por buscar sus propias noticias ven que no se publican, y a la larga esto les impulsa a no hacer ningún trabajo de investigación, porque igual no se va a publicar.

El periódico *Juventud Rebelde*, que era diario, se convirtió en semanario. Quedaron sólo el diario *Granma* y la revista *Bohemia*. Los dos medios que siguieron con su periodicidad fueron *Bohemia* y *Granma*. *Bohemia* porque era una publicación histórica y Fidel siempre lo tuvo consciente, además de que fue la revista donde él desarrolló casi toda su obra escrita, todos sus trabajos escritos. *Bohemia* significó mucho para la Revolución desde siempre. Tiene ciento seis años. *Bohemia* no puede cerrar. Ni cerró en el '59 o el '60 cuando el jefe se asiló en una embajada y la revista quedó al garete, y un periodista de la revista llamó a Fidel y le dijo: -Fidel, Miguelito se asiló-. Fidel le dijo: -Paga las deudas y hazte cargo de la dirección, porque *Bohemia* no puede cerrar-. Porque claro, la historia siempre se desvirtúa.

Alguna gente dice que la Revolución intervino los periódicos en el '59 y eso no es cierto. La Revolución intervino los periódicos de los que estaban comprometidos con la tiranía de Batista. Aquellos ministros, personeros de la tiranía. Esos periódicos fueron intervenidos el propio primero de enero. Fueron hasta quemados por el pueblo. Todos sabían que *Ataja* era un periódico batistiano desde la médula. Los demás periódicos, no hubo necesidad de crear una ley de intervención porque los dueños del *Diario de la Marina* se fueron para los Estados Unidos. El dueño de la revista *Bohemia*, Miguel Ángel Quevedo, se asiló en la embajada venezolana, ya te conté cómo fue la historia. Un periodista famoso, Enrique de la Osa, que tenía confianza con Fidel porque lo conocía de cuando estudiante, lo llamó y le dijo: -Miguelito se asiló-. Y él dijo que no cerrara *Bohemia* y que pagara las deudas.

No hubo una ley de intervención de medios. El mismo dueño de *Bohemia* era dueño de una revista que se llamaba *Carteles*, y el mismo dueño de *Bohemia*, que era ya millonario, la compró para que no le hiciera competencia. Entonces, él mantenía a *Carteles* en un escalón más bajo y a *Bohemia* arriba, que era la revista que todos buscaban. Los cubanos aprendimos a leer en *Bohemia*. Los cubanos de mi generación, todos te van a decir lo mismo: yo aprendí a leer en *Bohemia*, aprendí a conocer a Cuba en *Bohemia*. Cuando el director de *Carteles* se asila también, no es que eran perseguidos, es que vieron que aquello tomaba un rumbo que no era el previsto por ellos, que la Revolución se estaba radicalizando y se fueron, se asilaron, pensando que todo se resolvería y regresarían. Entonces, cuando este periodista de *Bohemia* llama a Fidel y le dice que Antonio Ortega se había asilado también, Fidel le dice: -Cierra la mierda esa-. No hubo que nacionalizar nada.

El *Diario de la Marina* quedó en manos de los trabajadores. Después se cerró porque fue el gran defensor de la reacción, y así fue todo por el estilo, y empezaron a surgir los periódicos revolucionarios. Quedó uno sólo. *El Mundo* fue el primer periódico moderno de Cuba desde 1901, y sobrevivió incluso la radicalización de la Revolución porque estaba dirigido por un hombre revolucionario, un gran periodista; y ese fue el único periódico que siguió existiendo tal y como había sido fundado. Lo dirigía un revolucionario y era revolucionario, lo dirigía Luis Gómez

Wangbebert (¿?) hasta el '68, que se quemó y se destruyó [¿lo quemaron los trabajadores, o fue un accidente?]. Pero ese es el periódico más viejo de Cuba como periódico moderno, porque *El Periódico La Marina* era del XIX. *El Mundo* fue el que surgió con las concepciones modernas del periodismo norteamericano, donde la noticia se convirtió en el elemento fundamental de los medios, que hasta ese momento todos eran ideologizantes, eran órganos del Partido. *El Mundo* comenzó a ser un periódico de información y así siguió siéndolo hasta el año '68. Más o menos, la cosa es que no siempre la prensa cubana fue mala.

En el 'Período Especial' hubo que restringir la tirada de los periódicos. *Bohemia* pasó a ser quincenal y se redujo su tamaño, los periódicos pasaron a ser tabloide, como si fueran sábanas. La primera página de un tabloide no es un picotillo de información, sino un trabajo que habla de una misma información. Estos de aquí tienen ocho páginas. Hacen una sábana en miniatura y yo no sé si los que lo hacen lo saben. Eso son tabloides en tamaño, pero no por el tratamiento técnico de la información. Un tabloide no es así. Es una sábana grande pero en miniatura, recortada. Si lo estiras, sigue siendo sábana, pero no saben.

Hubo un momento en que no fue así, que hubo espacio. Cuando dije eso en el lugar donde te dije que lo dije, alguien muy importante, el vicepresidente de Cuba, me preguntó en qué se diferenciaba esa prensa que yo decía que era buena a la de ahora. Así, de improviso, en aquella prensa los directores no consultaban, no había notas oficiales y los trabajos no se llevaban a consultar. Los trabajos conflictivos no llevaban visto bueno por arriba. Los directores tenían autoridad suficiente para tomar decisiones, y si se equivocaban pagaban su error, como es lógico. El dueño de un periódico le pide cuentas a su director por un error, y el dueño del periódico en Cuba es el Partido. Si un director se equivoca, entonces te piden cuentas.

Dado que Cuba vivió siempre en la situación de asedio, había algún tema de mucha delicadeza política que, si se iba a publicar alguna información, no un comentario, alguna información que entrara por un teletipo o una agencia extranjera, eso sí todo el mundo lo sabía: relaciones Cuba-Estados Unidos, cualquier cosa que entre hay que consultar porque eso es un asunto, el problema político más importante de este país y lo sigue siendo. Tú no puedes publicarle a la Clinton lo que acaba de decir, que quiere venir a Cuba así como así, porque eso ataña la seguridad. Lo publicas y mira, ¡qué gente más buena! Ellos quieren venir y no los dejamos. Eso es lo único que recuerdo que era de obligatoria consulta.

En el plano personal, nunca un texto mío fue llevado a consultar, y tuve años suficientes para decirte que sólo una vez hubo que hacerlo porque lo tenía que leer quien me lo pidió. Me pidieron una vez que escribiera un artículo cuando Fidel cumplió setenta años, y hasta ese momento nadie se acordaba del cumpleaños de Fidel, pasaba inadvertido. Cuando cumplió setenta años, el Partido quiso que un sólo periódico hablara de eso y me pidieron a mí que lo hiciera. Por supuesto, lo escribí como me lo mandaron, y me pidieron leerlo antes de publicarlo y no me dijeron nada, solamente modificar un término (ellos no querían dar la idea de que era el único que podía dirigir este país). La única vez que en cuarenta y dos años me hayan hecho eso. Los directores eran buenos, eran gente preparada con mucha experiencia social y política. Tenían más autoridad. Si se equivocaban, lo explicaban. Si no, tenían que pagar de alguna manera la crítica pública, o la crítica en la reunión. De alguna manera, decían que se habían equivocado. Los directores duraban años.

El 'Período Especial' empezó ya a crear... Como todo era especial, hubo muchos cambios, sobre todo en el aparato del Partido; llegaron personas nuevas. Las personas que dirigían la prensa se retiraron, se fueron a otros lugares, y entró un equipo que tuvo que aprender. En el 'Período Especial' comienzan a crearse los problemas, pero creo que se agudizan a partir del nuevo siglo. A partir del V Congreso del Partido se agudiza el fenómeno de la prensa, se limita más. Es lo que tú ves, lo que todo el mundo te dice. No acabamos de ponernos de acuerdo por un problema, a pesar de que Raúl dice que hay que acabar con el secretismo, de que la prensa debe decir los problemas.

Eso también confirma que, en este país, un sólo hombre nunca ha mandado, y eso te lo aseguro. A lo mejor, si un sólo hombre hubiese mandado y las cosas se hubiesen hecho como ese único hombre ha dicho, este país estuviera mejor. Eso te demuestra que cada departamento, cada organismo, tiene sus prerrogativas y sus libertades, y muchas veces se decide y se decide mal. Creo que hay muchas fuerzas encontradas que no se acaban de poner de acuerdo, y quien sufre es el país. En ese trabajo que te di podrás encontrar algo más conceptualizado.

Sara: Ahora mismo, en el Congreso de la UPEC se dieron voces muy críticas con el papel del periodismo en Cuba, y que proponen cambios, quizás una ley de comunicación.

RD6: Se habla de la ley, pero yo digo que una ley no va a resolver ningún problema, porque la ley puede no cumplirse. Aquí, el asunto es de voluntad política, de acabar de entender cuál es el papel de la prensa en una sociedad como la nuestra. Sacar las cuentas y percatarnos que el papel de la prensa es mucho más positivo que negativo cuando tiene espacio, que la prensa es dañina cuando no tiene espacio y se convierte en un libelo propagandístico, todo lleno de miel, de melaza, donde no hay conflictos, donde parece que vivimos en el mejor de los mundos posibles, una prensa panglosiana. Eso le hace más daño a este país que una prensa detrás de los problemas.

Sara: Si no es por ley, ¿cómo se cambia?

RD6: Con voluntad política. Porque, aunque aparentemente hay voluntad política, no la hay. Aunque el presidente lo diga, él no es el que dirige la prensa, hay un organismo para eso y hay un gobierno que no tiene la misma percepción que el presidente, y hay un Consejo de Ministros que retiene la información, que no la da, y se reúne todos los meses con el presidente del país a discutir los problemas de este país. Fíjate lo complicado que es este país. Falta voluntad política homogénea, unánime, y que se le den prerrogativas legales y prerrogativas políticas. Porque la ley puede ser un papel mojado, y lo que no es papel mojado es la voluntad política. Porque entonces el Partido, en vez de ser el que te critica y el que te revisa, es el que te defiende cuando los organismos del estado te atacan.

Sara: Usted estaba en *Juventud Rebelde* cuando se hizo la cobertura de los lineamientos. Dicen algunos periodistas que pareciera que la prensa no estaba autorizada para hablar abiertamente de eso.

RD6: Estaba sufriendo lo mismo que lo que sufre hoy. Yo, con mis comentarios, a nadie le pedí permiso. Con directores, tanto Polanco como RC24, si alguna vez teníamos que discutir una frase, una palabra, yo cedía siempre, pero habitualmente los trabajos pasaban sin ningún problema. No crea que todo el mundo a todos los niveles estaba de acuerdo, algunos podían mirarme con ojeriza. Yo no tengo ningún privilegio en este país, lo que tengo es lo que gano, nadie me ha dado ningún privilegio. El único privilegio que he tenido es que me han dado una carrera feliz, porque he querido hacer lo que en un país como este se podía hacer y no desperdicié oportunidad, y sigo escribiendo libros. Todo el mundo sabe que he sido fiel a mi causa; todo el mundo sabe que tengo opiniones y que las defiende. Por ejemplo, tengo un programa de radio que se llama *Hablando Claro*, y estamos RD2, RD10 y yo.

RA7

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Sara: ¿Cuáles son las principales ventajas y problemas del periodismo cubano actual?

RA7: La primera, yo creo que es que el sistema de medios cubano no está bajo el control de instituciones privadas, es decir, digamos que hay una garantía en el hecho de que la mayoría de los medios respondan al estado como institución. A la vez, de alguna manera, eso también significa un riesgo, porque la mayoría de los medios, al ser financiados por el estado y, además, responder a los intereses políticos de determinadas organizaciones partidistas, etc., el control de su agenda se configura a partir de las necesidades de esas instituciones. Pero bueno, al no estar controlados, administrados por actores privados, garantiza también que haya un enfoque un poco más cultural, más de impacto también social en lo que se divulga a través de la prensa, en lo que se comunica a través de los medios. Eso me parece que es una ventaja, y a la vez una desventaja.

Yo creo que de ahí se desprenden casi todos los otros problemas, casi todos los otros condicionantes del trabajo periodístico en Cuba. Digamos que, ahora mismo, una de las principales cuestiones que se debaten al interior del gremio, es decir, nosotros los periodistas, en los congresos, en todos los foros, es el hecho de que no existe una variedad de medios tan amplia como quisiéramos para una sociedad que está cambiando ahora mismo, con transformaciones económicas; fundamentalmente, transformaciones estructurales. Y que, además, está recibiendo un influjo, es decir, lo está viviendo en carne propia, de la apertura que significan Internet y las NTIC. Entonces, una vez que surge un proyecto nuevo en Cuba, que tiene que ver con la información y los medios, generalmente tiene que pasar por el tamiz, por un control que debes conocer tú también. Es decir, hay mucho rigor en todo lo que es la prensa acreditada, tanto la extranjera como la cubana, y de alguna manera, el Comité Central del Partido también vigila, orienta lo que hacen los medios. Eso limita a mi parecer, en mi modo de ver, limita bastante lo que puede hacerse, es decir, esa diversidad que es tan innata del momento actual, a partir de la mediación que es real, que existe, de Internet, no se puede hacer posible, o no se hace posible en todas sus dimensiones precisamente por este control.

Los periodistas nos quejamos también de cierta desprofesionalización al interior de los medios. Esa palabra la debes de haber escuchado en otros momentos, es decir, hubo una crisis en el sector de la comunicación, sobre todo del periodismo, durante los años noventa. Muchos profesionales emigraron hacia otros campos y, entonces, eso condujo a que entraran en los medios profesionales que no estaban... no habían estudiado periodismo propiamente; no habían estudiado carreras afines al periodismo. Hemos arrastrado con prácticas, también personas que están acostumbradas quizás a administrar, están acostumbradas a otras cuestiones, pero no conducen el periodismo desde la visión del comunicador.

Esa desprofesionalización se ha volcado también hacia otros espacios. Lo podemos ver cuando damos clases aquí, cómo se les habla a los estudiantes de que tienen que utilizar determinadas herramientas, que tienen que jugar determinados roles al interior de los medios. Y cuando llegan a los medios, entonces, incluso dentro de las propias prácticas de producción periodística, empiezan a reproducir algunas rutinas, empiezan a reproducir algunos vicios que afectan al sector profesional,

al sector de la prensa. Estos vicios por ejemplo son el apego demasiado fuerte a las fuentes institucionales, es decir, un achatamiento (¿?), un acomodamiento también a ser orientados, a ser dirigidos por esa instancia superior que es el Comité Central del Partido; mucha autocensura también, aunque ahora mismo digamos que la autocensura no es el principal problema. Existe la autocensura, porque también hay prácticas que hemos ido asimilando, de quietud.

Sara: Esa autocensura, ¿es algo que se aprende, que se transmite cuando trabajas en los medios?

RA7: En la facultad los estudiantes sienten muchísimo el contraste, aunque por supuesto se les intenta hablar de un escenario real que van ver en cuanto se gradúen. Incluso, que confrontan incluso cuando van a la práctica de un mes y de dos meses que hacen durante el curso. Pero en la facultad se les habla del ideal del periodismo, de todo lo arriesgado y todo lo valiente que debe ser el periodista. Y cuando llegan a los medios, generalmente, se encuentran con profesionales que ya llevan mucho tiempo haciendo lo mismo, mucho tiempo también batallando contra el molino gigante, y entonces, también, de alguna manera, se acoplan. Y es chocante, y desmotivante.

Ahora mismo se habla mucho de autocensura, pero no creo que la autocensura sea la principal barrera. Yo creo que la mayoría de los profesionales de la prensa, sobre todo a raíz de todas las discusiones que están teniendo lugar, a partir de los congresos, de la regeneración de la UPEC como institución gremial... La mayoría de los periodistas están conscientes de que tienen que contribuir al desarrollo del periodismo, y de que no deben dejar de asumir riesgos, y todo lo demás. Pero, hay prácticas demasiado establecidas, que son demasiado rígidas y difíciles de quebrar.

Sara: Bueno, en lo que dices veo, por una parte, la función ideológica del periodismo ligada a su misión política y, por otra parte, los valores profesionales del periodismo. ¿Crees que estas dos visiones entran en contradicción algunas veces?

RA7: Sí, exactamente. Los medios que tenemos ahora mismo están consagrados a reproducir ideológicamente el sistema, es decir, es así. Y entonces, como no existe esa diversidad de la que te hablaba, es muy difícil que todos los valores de la profesión periodística se vean floreciendo plenamente en nuestro contexto porque, al tener esas condicionantes externas, el deber ser del periodismo no se concreta, no cuaja completamente. Exactamente sí, son esos dos polos ahí confluyendo, que incluso son cosas muy discutidas. Es decir, los dirigentes del Comité Central del Partido y los dirigentes de la prensa de alguna manera se han sentado a discutir en una misma mesa. No es que no exista esa confrontación, sino que esa confrontación no ha sido quizás todo lo diáfana y todo lo expedita (clara y libre de obstáculos) que debería en algún momento, porque llevamos también muchos años en los que había una distancia bastante grande (distancia entre comillas, porque siempre ha trabajado el control, y siempre ha habido respuestas), en el sentido de que abiertamente se están planteando los problemas que tienen los periodistas como profesionales, y para ejercer su profesión como debe ser. Y que ya se nota también, por parte de la dirigencia del Partido, el interés por conocer a fondo la profesión periodística y las inquietudes del periodismo y yo creo que eso ha venido con los cambios estructurales del sistema que no se veía antes (antes quiero decir en los noventa, quizás a finales de los ochenta). Al final, en el momento de construcción digamos de lo que es el proyecto revolucionario, la mediación ideológica, la participación de la dirigencia política de la Revolución era casi directa. Pero, por ejemplo, en el ICRT, en la televisión misma, en la participación de los líderes políticos, ese tipo de construcción del discurso periodístico era muy directa. Eso de pronto empezó a cambiar, y entonces, se burocratizó demasiado la gestión del Partido sobre los medios y una cadena de funcionarios, orientaciones, etc. fue afectando ese vínculo más horizontal, ese vínculo franco, más bien, de poder decir: lo hacemos así, creemos que se puede hacer por esa línea; decir: lo tenemos que hacer porque se nos dice, o porque esto es lo que está realmente bien para el sistema.

Sara: En su libro, Julio García Luis habla de la forma en que se concibió la profesión periodística en Cuba. En tu opinión, ¿qué conceptos o ideas influyeron en la forma de entender la función del periodismo en Cuba?

RA7: Yo creo que eso que dice Julio es lo que le pasa a otras tantas aristas dentro del sistema. Por ejemplo, la historización de la prensa no concretada en materiales, en libros, porque ha sido también tan problemática... Es también lo que le pasa a la historia económica de la Revolución. Cuando lo comparas con otros sectores de la sociedad cubana, al periodismo le ha pasado lo mismo que a otras zonas extremadamente complejas, donde se dirimen conflictos que de alguna manera hablan de la continuidad, de la legitimidad también del proyecto revolucionario.

Sara: Como el mundo cultural, por ejemplo.

RA7: En el mundo cultural, sobre la crisis de la cultura en los años setenta se comienza a hablar en los años 2000 francamente, a camisa quitada. Y se empieza a hablar porque hay mitos (¿?). Esos conflictos, que han sido similares en la prensa y en otros espacios, no se han debatido con la misma intensidad. En el mundo cultural, y precisamente por la presión y también por el prestigio que tenían algunos intelectuales que en algún momento sufrieron exclusiones, que en algún momento no fueron comprendidos como debían haber sido comprendidos; algunos que no fueron de hecho asimilados en toda su diversidad, en toda su complejidad por el sistema, como el sistema había prometido. Los intelectuales dicen: yo me adherí al proceso revolucionario porque el proceso revolucionario prometía acoger a toda esa diversidad de personas, de pensamiento, de posturas políticas que no tenían cabida en la sociedad anterior. Y entonces, ya conoces bien las dinámicas; afectaron después su participación. Pero la presión, la autoridad también que se fueron ganando esos intelectuales, después les permitió hablar, es decir, abrir el debate, sobre lo que había pasado en determinados momentos. No pasa así en el periodismo.

Sara: ¿Por qué crees que no pasó eso en el campo del periodismo?

RA7: Yo creo que, de alguna manera, también porque los conflictos en el campo periodístico han sido más restringidos, es decir, han sido siempre dirimidos en pequeños espacios, por un lado. Por otro lado, figuras de autoridad como Julio García Luis, hay pocas. No hay tantas en el caso del periodismo con esta implicación, es decir, con esta visión amplia de lo que debe ser el periodismo, que hayan echado hacia delante proyectos tan arriesgados como lo es el libro de Julio. Y ya conoces la historia del libro de Julio, estuvo muchos años, casi una década, para ser publicado. Y él lo reconoce en su introducción en su libro, no es que haya dejado de decir cosas, pero ha sido mucho más... [Hablan de los matices del libro]. Porque conocemos su personalidad y sus conflictos, nos damos cuenta del porqué.

Todos esos factores están confluyendo para esa construcción del periodismo que tenemos, es decir, esa mediación ideológica muy fuerte, esa falta de asimilación de lo que es la diversidad, ese querer cuidarse demasiado de lo que puede afectar también, y es válido, yo creo que es válido, lo que pasa es que no en todo momento se ha manejado con todo el cuidado, no sé, el lado fino... el tema de la penetración ideológica y la incidencia de determinados actores, como le llamamos aquí el enemigo, en el lenguaje revolucionario, que realmente han querido horadar el proceso revolucionario, el periodismo cubano. Yo creo que todas esas cuestiones confluyendo han hecho que tengamos ahora este tiempo de periodismo que tenemos, y el factor más reciente es este de los profesionales, no suficientemente preparados para enfrentar el ejercicio periodístico con todas las herramientas.

Sara: ¿En qué medida crees que influye la mentalidad de plaza sitiada la producción periodística hoy en día? ¿Hay un cambio en la forma en la que se lidia con el enemigo externo?

RA7: Sí, yo creo que sí lo hay, lo que pasa es que está demasiado presente hoy en día, sobre

todo a la hora de considerar que pueda haber otros espacios de expresión pública que puedan ser llevados por periodistas, por profesionales de la cultura, sobre todo. No tanto [cambio] quizás en la labor cotidiana, en lo que se hace en los medios de comunicación tradicionales, en los medios que responden directamente a las organizaciones políticas y demás. Yo creo que ya el tema de la amenaza externa está suficientemente incorporado como para saber lo que debe publicarse, o lo que es beneficioso o dañino para la población. En el caso de la aprobación de determinados proyectos por figuras que no están ligadas directamente a los medios tradicionales; o de proyectos que pudiera hacer un joven [ruido, no se escucha bien], al que se le den determinadas facilidades, como el acceso al papel, eso todavía no se ha controlado. Y la amenaza, el asunto de la plaza sitiada, es un condicionante que yo creo que es de los más importantes. Si se piensa siempre en que puede haber argumentos, que los hay, para pensar en que hay algún factor externo que pueda servir a la subversión... De todas maneras, yo creo que en los medios tradicionales, a pesar de que eso no es algo que se maneje todo el tiempo, el no podemos publicar porque le vamos a dar razones al enemigo para... Por ejemplo, todavía perduran muchos prejuicios, sobre todo, que no han sido lo suficientemente discutidos.

Por ejemplo, en el caso de la cultura, la dificultad, la resistencia que encontramos a veces para publicar sobre determinadas personalidades de la cultura que en algún momento han tenido una posición reacia respecto al proceso revolucionario es real. Encontramos esa reacción, quizás, en nuestro editor, en nuestro jefe de redacción... Es decir, no es que esté escrito en ninguna parte (la famosa lista en la que estaban Celia Cruz y (¿?), que no podían salir en la radio) ... No sé si la lista existe, o si no existe. Yo nunca he visto una lista, pero sé que escribir sobre Celia Cruz en los medios cubanos requiere un cuidado, por ponerte un ejemplo. Es más fácil, por tanto, encontrar ese tipo de información en otros lugares, y no en los medios tradicionales. Cosa que es completamente un tabú, una cosa ilógica, no tiene sentido. Es una figura de la cultura, o un científico, y si se explica bien, si se maneja como debe ser, teniendo en cuenta el espacio para el que uno escribe, no veo por qué no se puede hacer. Y eso yo creo que tiene que ver con el fenómeno de plaza sitiada.

Sara: ¿Tú crees que el periodismo cubano puede cumplir su función social hoy en día?

RA7: Sí, yo creo que en determinados espacios sí. Yo creo que, de alguna manera, lo más importante es que se está trabajando mucho para que el periodismo recupere en primera estancia esa función de servidor público que tiene. Creo que hay muchas voluntades confluyendo y que nosotros mismos, las personas jóvenes, los que estamos vinculados también al espacio de la academia, creemos que hay potencialidades en el periodismo, y que hay potencialidades en los medios para que el periodismo cubano cumpla con esa función. Y que tenga esa vocación, que en definitiva es su especificidad como profesión. Lo que pasa es que todavía hay que derrumbar muchísimos obstáculos, muchísimas barreras.

Hay también una concepción bastante equivocada de lo que es esa función de servicio público de determinados actores que, o han sido manipulados, o se dejan manipular. También con un sentimiento positivo, es decir, confundimos esa noción de servicio público con una propaganda bastante vacía y bastante falsa. Es decir, esos mismos espacios que tú ves en la televisión, en los periódicos, están para poner a hablar a los ciudadanos comunes y corrientes de sus problemas y todo lo demás. Yo creo que se alejan bastante. Tienen que ver, pero se alejan bastante de la función de servicio público, que es enfrentar directamente esos problemas, publicarlos y contrastarlos así, sin articular un discurso propio con el discurso de las instituciones. No se trata de presentar una visión y presentar la otra para que el periodismo cumpla su rol ciudadano, se trata de realmente usar las herramientas de la población para denunciar los males sociales, denunciar la corrupción, [los males] que tiene este sistema como la hiper-burocratización de todos los procesos, etc. Todas las trabas que hacen que nuestro sistema social no avance lo suficiente. Yo creo que el periodismo sí tiene todas las potencialidades, y que hay muchos profesionales que sí, pero hay otros que todavía tienen una idea equivocada de lo que debe ser.

Sara: Algo que me llama la atención es que se lleva hablando sobre los problemas del periodismo desde, al menos, 1975. En cada congreso de la UPEC se han repetido cuáles son los problemas. Si parece que hay una voluntad profesional y una voluntad política, ¿por qué crees que han tardado tanto en materializarse en cambios sustanciales?

RA7: Sí, es esa correlación sistema social- sistema comunicativo que es algo que no puede, de alguna manera, del sistema. Entonces, tarda mucho también en cambiar. Siempre las organizaciones políticas, las estructuras de dirección de la Revolución, han tardado mucho en cambiar, han tardado mucho en despertar. Es un gigante que ha demorado mucho en dar cada uno de los pasos. Y precisamente por eso, el periodismo también ha sufrido eso, la correlación instituciones de comunicación- instituciones sociales es demasiado estrecha como para desprenderse tan fácilmente de eso. Por supuesto, ha habido contradicciones pero también ha habido muchos pactos en función de preservar determinadas conquistas, de preservar determinados logros. Y eso es comprensible, pero también ha sido lacerante para nuestro sistema de medios porque no ha sido un sistema de medios lo suficientemente revolucionario como para que exista, en todo momento, esa crítica de los procesos, que es la que hace que los procesos evolucionen.

Sara: Por ejemplo, eso fue lo que se criticó a mediados de los ochenta, que la prensa no había sido capaz de identificar y de sacar a la luz una serie de problemas.

RA7: La ‘Rectificación de Errores’ tuvo lugar en medio de una coyuntura internacional que nos tocaba muy cerca, que fue todo el descalabre (¿?) de la Unión Soviética y todos los procesos de apertura. Esa mediación externa también fue demasiado fuerte como para que ese proceso realmente fructificara. De todos modos, ese despertar de la crítica en ese momento (yo no lo viví, yo estaba naciendo en el ’87) me cuentan que la crítica iba a ser tan frontal, tan abierta, que en medio de la coyuntura internacional era muy difícil sostener la coherencia entre lo que estaba sucediendo y, por otra parte, había un temor a que se revirtiera el proceso revolucionario, como se revirtió en la Unión Soviética. En una tesis de licenciatura [¿que supervisó?] estudiamos esos procesos (de la *glasnost*, del 86 hasta el ’89). Nosotros utilizamos las publicaciones del *Sputnik* y *Novedades de Moscú*, que eran dos publicaciones soviéticas que hacían como un *review* de lo que se publicaba en la prensa soviética y se hacían copias para el extranjero. Eso era el *Sputnik*, y *Novedades* era como un gran periódico, pero también hacía selecciones. Mis padres leían sobre lo que estaba pasando en la URSS en esas publicaciones, y alguna otra.

Si me preguntan si fue la *glasnost* lo que acabó con el socialismo en la URSS, no lo creo. Realmente se dio un proceso de apertura bastante amplio, pero que contribuyó a que despertaran otros monstruos que estaban escondidos. Por eso no hay que temerle ahora, si lo miramos desde lejos, a una apertura en el proceso de comunicación cubano porque no creo que existan hoy en Cuba las mismas condiciones sociales que existían en la URSS. Si miramos, en un momento se pareció bastante. Entiendo que en el ’86, en el proceso de ‘Rectificación de Errores’, estuviera latente, pero a lo largo de los años no creo que se pueda considerar una amenaza. Se parece bastante, pero la situación interna y la condición externa son completamente distintas. Por ejemplo, en el contexto internacional hay una situación de Guerra Fría y demás, y aquí adentro hay problemas estructurales grandes en el sistema, pero no es lo mismo. Hablando desde una perspectiva histórica, no podemos decir que la URSS sea un precedente para mantener cerrado nuestro sistema de medios. Por eso me venía a la cabeza el ejemplo, porque muchas veces los dirigentes políticos, me parece a mí que tienen la idea de que puede pasar igual. Yo varios periodistas y varios investigadores de comunicación en Cuba se han dedicado a demostrar que no va a suceder.

Sara: Estaba leyendo un artículo de RC4 en el que explica ese miedo a la *glasnost* que tú explicas.

RA7: Sí, es que es completamente irracional tomar una realidad que no tiene nada que ver, bueno, que tiene muchísimos puntos en común con la nuestra, pero que es no es igual a la nuestra, y culpabilizar a la prensa de haber nacido como con ese mal, con el pecado original, como decía el Che en el caso de los intelectuales.

Sara: En el VI Congreso del Partido se le asignó a la prensa el papel de ayudar a crear consenso en una realidad que está cambiando. ¿Tú has visto, a parte de los debates, cambios en lo publicado?

RA7: Lo voy a decir con toda honestidad. Para mí es un poco triste pensar que sí ha habido cambios, pero no han sido lo suficientemente efectivos, y que no han sido todos los cambios que deseamos, que estamos evaluando. Por ejemplo, esto mismo de los espacios que les dan a las personas del pueblo para denunciar la corrupción, etc. públicamente en los medios no existían. Las transformaciones son extremadamente lentas para un sector que se dinamiza rápidamente con el influjo de las NTIC. Entonces, las personas que vienen de otro lugar dirán, ¡qué difícil! No lo podrán comprender en toda su dimensión. Hay que estudiar un poco lo que había sido la prensa unos años antes para darse cuenta del anquilosamiento tan grande y que ahora también, poco a poco, las transformaciones se han ido dando en nuestro sistema de medios en favor de la profesión periodística, aunque no sean todas las transformaciones que hemos deseado. Por ejemplo, que los dirigentes hablen abiertamente del papel que debe jugar la prensa, a pesar de que todavía estamos transitando todos estos procesos que tienen que ver con todos los procesos de mediaciones que tenemos... Que los políticos hablen abiertamente de eso, que la Conferencia del Partido y los Lineamientos tengan dos o tres puntos que hablen del papel de la prensa son determinadas garantías, hasta cierto punto garantías para el ejercicio de la profesión periodística con una mayor libertad. Esos son los principales cambios.

A nivel de lo que se publica, yo creo que son demasiado cándidos todavía, que es la proliferación de los espacios de opinión para que los periodistas hagan trabajos de estos géneros: comentarios... En *Juventud Rebelde* y ahora en *Granma* también han abierto un día. Los medios no llegan a tener su propia agenda porque siempre están respondiendo a una agenda prefijada. Las páginas de opinión de *Juventud Rebelde* se parecen mucho a las páginas de *Granma* de opinión, y el sitio digital se parece en extremo, y así pasa con otros. Pero mira, hay un espacio para que los periodistas se empiecen a entrenar, para que los periodistas también empiecen a entrenarse. Por eso hay muchos comentarios que son del uso del lenguaje, de las maneras... son cositas tiernas, no cuajan. Y además, tampoco están escritos desde una pluma bien filosa, bien pulida, porque la gente ha perdido la costumbre y también se lo encargan a los jóvenes que no tienen ese entendimiento tampoco. Hay muchos que han empezado sus trabajos. Tengo un colega que es muy joven, pero está muy bien preparado y todo lo demás, y empezó a tener grandes pugnas con su director por ese problema, por ejercer la opinión como él entiende que debe ser ejercida y el muchacho salió del medio por su propia voluntad porque no quería seguir ahí. Entonces, el Partido de alguna manera incidió (no por este caso, sino por las prácticas en general) para que esa persona no estuviera más ahí y fuera a ejercer otro cargo, y sí designar a otra que sí realmente tenía intenciones de asimilar las críticas. Por un lado, hay situaciones, pero por otro también van apareciendo determinadas soluciones, alivios.

Sara: ¿Cuál crees que ha sido la influencia de Internet y las nuevas tecnologías en la hegemonía comunicacional del Partido?

RA7: Hay otros foros donde la gente conversa, hay otros espacios donde la gente busca información y es imposible decir que el pueblo cubano se informa con *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde*. Entonces, el Partido se ha dado cuenta de que hay que evolucionar, hay que cambiar para que la gente no se vaya a leer por ahí por el *Nuevo Herald*, ni por otros medios que no tienen nada que ver con la realidad. Por otro lado, yo creo que las nuevas tecnologías han despertado también la voluntad de que exista más participación ciudadana en los debates que se dirimen en medio de la esfera pública. Ya las personas saben que, a lo mejor, tecnológicamente no les es factible, pero

pueden hacer su blog, que pueden postear su comentario en algún lugar. Eso forma parte del ejercicio del criterio, es decir, de la participación ciudadana en procesos fundamentales de nuestro sistema que no estaba pasando antes. La participación, entre comillas, del pueblo en determinados espacios y debates se estaba dando en la asamblea de revisión de cuentas con los delegados del Poder Popular, pero no estaba pasando así, y por supuesto que no podía ocurrir tan abiertamente, es decir, no podía ser completa en ninguno de estos foros gigantes que son los congresos, y todo eso.

Sara: Has comentado que las personas no se informan solamente por *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde* pero, ¿cómo se informan?

RA7: Las personas no tienen acceso a Internet tan fácilmente, pero es increíble cómo han proliferado al interior de la sociedad cubana determinados actores que son como líderes por un lado de opinión, en el sentido de que son proveedores de materiales para que la gente los lea. Más que líderes, determinados espacios, pequeños actores comunitarios que reciben y envían información a través del correo electrónico. Por ejemplo, hay muchos intelectuales que no tienen acceso a Internet pero que utilizan el correo electrónico porque tienen un familiar fuera que hace un resumen de la prensa internacional y de otros medios y se la envían a sus colegas, y tienen unas listas enormes de correos electrónicos, y la gente sí que puede más o menos revisar su correo (infomed, cubarte...). Y por otro lado, están estas alternativas que no se si has escuchado sobre el famoso paquete de información (son sobre todo películas).

Sara: He escuchado hablar del paquete, pero si me lo pudieras explicar bien...

RA7: Por eso te hablaba de personas que no son líderes, sino que tienen un pequeño rol, pero que a la vez se replica y es muy interesante desde el punto de vista de la comunicación. Al no tener Internet, tenemos un Internet local. Esta gente tiene facilidades para conectarse a Internet y descargar series, películas, revistas, catálogos y hacer un compendio de información de unos cuantos gigas, poquitos, y lo reparten semanalmente en determinados puntos. Es decir, la persona que tiene el paquete cobra por 2 CUC a la semana, recoge ese paquete y lo distribuye entre otros actores de su comunidad (y son receptores del paquete lo mismo un niño de diez años que está buscando una serie manga que...). Hay varios paquetes, pero es casi todo lo mismo. Tienes que ver uno, porque tiene pequeñas interfaces donde se explica qué viene en el paquete. Tienes que ver unas pequeñas redes de personas que se conectan a través de cables, incluso a través de edificios, son redes comunitarias de personas que saben un poco de tecnología, para jugar y para compartir contenidos. Y los contenidos que comparten son... Publica *InterPress Service* un artículo de Leonardo Padura y lo cuelga ahí. Y la gente lo consume, es increíble.

Sara: Entonces, las personas que configuran el paquete tienen un inmenso poder de llegar a los ciudadanos.

RA7: Claro, lo que crea conflicto es que esa persona no está preparada culturalmente para hacerlo. Hay iniciativas institucionales tardías para, de alguna forma, ofrecer una alternativa al paquete. Por ejemplo, esto no sé si se maneja públicamente, hay un paquete institucional que se llama *Mi Mochila*. Es una oferta que tiene libros... Es una iniciativa que existe porque no existe Internet. Si tuviéramos Internet, *el paquete* no existiría. Existe porque la población cubana tiene necesidad de informarse por otras vías y de consumir productos más allá de la televisión nacional.

Sara: Ya para terminar, he escuchado rumores sobre una comisión que está debatiendo una posible ley de comunicación. ¿Qué se sabe al respecto?

RA7: Hay varios periodistas profesionales que están trabajando en un proyecto para la regulación de la comunicación. No sé si va a terminar en una ley de medios. Lo que sí que te puedo decir es que existe un proyecto para una ley de cine, siempre ha ido un poco por delante porque, en el caso

de los artistas, han tenido otras formas de asociación, otras formas de financiamiento. Entonces, necesitan un macrolaboratorio que los ampare para poder mostrar sus creaciones en Cuba y en el extranjero. En el caso de la prensa es más complicado por todo lo que hemos hablado, pero existe un proyecto para ordenar la comunicación en Cuba. Hay determinados actores, el decano y unos cuantos periodistas que están implicados podrán hablarte más de eso.

Sara: ¿Y qué modelos comunicativos se estudian en la Facultad como referentes? Sin referentes, ¿no sería un proceso a la deriva?

RA7: Ese es el tema, yo creo que falta estudiar todavía estudiar los referentes internacionales que nos puedan servir para orientar el proceso. Por ejemplo, yo creo que lo que está sucediendo con las leyes de comunicación en Argentina, hemos traído también especialistas de Ecuador, de estos países que sus proyectos políticos tienen mucho en contacto con los nuestros, han venido aquí y han explicado cómo funciona la cosa. Lo que pasa es que las transformaciones que han tenido que operarse en esos lugares han sido demasiado distantes, estaba todo el tema de los actores privados, y aquí es distinto. Yo creo que se puede mirar, por ejemplo, hacia una televisión pública que ofrezca productos que sean todo lo inteligentes que puede ser el Canal 7 en Argentina, [menciona un programa para niños] etc. Pero el paso intermedio, qué se necesita para llegar a ese punto, yo creo que eso no está todavía lo suficientemente claro. No soy yo la persona más indicada para hablarte de eso porque no participo de ningún proceso a esos niveles, pero ahí es cómo se enreda. Se sabe cuáles son los valores que tenemos que mantener: mantener la vocación de servicio público, renovarla también, preservar de alguna manera las principales conquistas de la Revolución... Pero yo creo que los 'cómos' son los más entrevistados [hablan del trabajo de RC4].

Sara: Entonces, va para largo...

RA7: Yo creo que, a nosotros, los que estamos haciendo el periodismo a otro nivel, sí nos queda bastante, yo creo que sí que hay que presionar bastante, y hay que intentar que esa visión que tenemos sobre lo que debe ser el periodismo llegue, se concrete mucho más en las páginas de los diarios, en la televisión... Si no ya enfrentamiento, que no es lo ideal, diálogo un poco más diáfano con los dirigentes y mostrar que el periodismo cubano tiene carácter. Hay que mostrar cuál es el carácter real, es decir, que podemos y que no se trata de confianza, ni mucho menos, sino de cumplir un rol social.

RA8

**PhD Candidate and former Assistant Professor at the Faculty of
Communication, *University of Havana***

Havana, 20 July 2014

During this interview, there was a technical problema with the recorder. Threfore, it was agreed that the researcher would take notes during the interview. These notes were then discussed with him one week after the original interview took place. I told the interviewee that I would not use exact quotes of the interview. It is for this reason that, in his consent form, he does not allow direct quotes, but does allow the researcher to use the interview as contextualisation, as well as rephrasing his words.

RC9

**High-Ranking Professor at the Department of Journalism Studies,
*University of Havana***

Havana, 29 September 2014

Sara: He tenido acceso a muchas tesis de licenciatura sobre la cobertura de los lineamientos, pero no he encontrado tantas tesis que tratan los medios en la década de los noventa.

RC9: Los noventa es un periodo que, en mi opinión, debería explorarse más. Los noventa fue un periodo complejo, como tú sabes. El muro de Berlín cae en el '89, la Unión Soviética se desintegra en el '91, y empieza en Cuba lo que se llamó el 'Período Especial'. Ese 'Período Especial' supuso una reducción drástica de todos los medios de comunicación (eso está en estadísticas, en datos que manejo también en mi tesis). Entre ellos, en el caso del teleperiodismo supuso que prácticamente quedara un noticiero al día y una producción a bajo costo. La televisión, por supuesto, lleva mucha más producción para poderla hacer. Para mantener funcionando la televisión se decidió básicamente que se hiciera un tipo de programación que era en estudio, mayoritariamente, utilizando la entrevista... Y eso trajo consigo una subversión, que dura hasta hoy, de las rutinas productivas en el teleperiodismo y, en general, en el periodismo cubano. Porque si bien la televisión estuvo muy impactada por las razones lógicas de que hacer televisión significa tener un aparato productivo más poderoso que lo sustente, los otros medios no vivieron una situación distinta. Y eso trajo una subversión productiva que ha sido muy negativa para el periodismo cubano.

Sara: Me han dicho que en los años noventa se produjo una desprofesionalización del periodismo cubano.

RC9: Cuando en mi tesis analizo mediaciones sobre entrevistas... Yo analicé entrevistas en el sistema informativo de la televisión cubana porque es la principal productora de noticias en Cuba, el corazón del teleperiodismo cubano. Entonces, ¿por qué analizo entrevistas? En primer lugar, en el teleperiodismo de hoy, incluso en el periodismo de hoy, es consustancial al ejercicio periodístico, por el desarrollo de las tecnologías, por lo que significa el dialogismo, etc. Por tanto, su abundancia te permite analizar los productos comunicativos en general. En segundo lugar, porque la entrevista representa las voces de los otros en cualquier espacio de comunicación. Por tanto, la aparición o no, y la cualidad o no de esa entrevista, deriva en la cualidad del sistema comunicativo y del sistema sociopolítico. Si hay más entrevistas, es un sistema comunicativo más dialógico; si hay menos entrevistas, menos, y está a su vez también cualificando el sistema socio-político.

Ese fue un pretexto para analizar el teleperiodismo. Yo lo vi en varios espacios. Uno, una entrevista común en televisión, que es la entrevista personal, un espacio que se llama 'Pasaje de un desconocido', que generalmente se realiza a intelectuales, científicos, etc., y que aborda más bien temas científicos. Otra, en la modalidad de tertulia, que aborda fundamentalmente temas culturales y otra es la modalidad de los telediarios. Escogí un telediario determinado. Eso me permitió recorrer la televisión completa, informativa, obviamente, y las articulaciones que tiene con el resto de la televisión. Entonces ver, a través de todos los telediarios, cómo funciona el telediario mismo, es decir, estructuré las mediaciones que estaban incidiendo en los resultados que yo había alcanzado.

Esas mediaciones son, por un lado, mediaciones tecnológicas; mediaciones productivas, que tienen tanta influencia en el contexto de la televisión; otras son mediaciones del contexto político- social, que son mediaciones externas, y otras son mediaciones socio-profesionales. Yo analizo un periodo, básicamente 2007-2008... ¿Por qué analicé ese periodo? En el 2007 ocurre lo que se llamó ‘la guerra de los emails’, se hace este ciclo de conferencias que tiene que ver con la revisitación de las políticas culturales de la Revolución, y sale una resolución del Buró Político, que reconoce que la prensa tiene un estado lamentable y apoya, digamos, la independencia de la prensa.

Sara: Una pregunta que me surge, ¿por qué se habla sólo de la prensa?

RC9: Cuando aquí se habla de prensa en términos genéricos se está refiriendo a todos los medios cubanos, a medios de comunicación. Esta es una sociedad que tiene una gran cultura audiovisual, por razones obvias. Aquí, junto con Venezuela, fueron los primeros países de América Latina donde se introdujo el cine. Después, la televisión en el año '50 junto con Argentina, Brasil y México, es decir, hay una gran cultura audiovisual. Y después de la Revolución la creación sobre todo del ICAIC consolidó esa cultura audiovisual. Y de hecho, hay una cultura informativa que tiene que ver con la cultura política determinada. Por lo tanto, son audiencias muy exigentes desde el punto de vista de la información. Grosso modo, ¿qué fue lo que pasó?

Triunfo de la Revolución en 1959. A partir de ahí se re-estructura toda la propiedad en general en el país, y en particular en los medios de comunicación. Esta prensa de los sesenta es muy interesante, porque como expresa el intelectual cubano Fernando Martínez Heredia, Cuba, en ese momento, formó parte de un proyecto que estaba reconociéndose a sí mismo, explorándose a sí mismo, y experimentando consigo mismo. Si bien los medios de comunicación se volcaron a apoyar el proceso revolucionario en general, propició dentro de ella una diversidad y una confrontación en los modos de hacerlo, en los estilos, en las tendencias, en las contradicciones y todo ello fue reflejado en los medios de comunicación; incluso, en el propio teleperiodismo. Después viene una segunda etapa que va desde finales de los sesenta, hasta yo que lo llamaría mediados de los ochenta. Coincide la muerte del Che (Fernando Martínez Heredia expone la muerte del Che y otros fenómenos que tuvieron que ver con la posición de Cuba en América Latina, la ruptura y demás), como digamos un periodo de recortamiento del proyecto cubano por el propio contexto. De hecho, Cuba tiene que adscribirse de manera casi inobjetable al bloque socialista y establece sus relaciones con la entonces Unión Soviética, que no era su escenario natural, pero tuvo que hacerlo para sobrevivir. Esto propicia, en general, el contexto de los setenta, llamado el contexto del ‘*Quinquenio Gris*’, de restricciones, de represiones, digamos, en el sentido más abierto del término. Es en ese periodo que suceden todos los acontecimientos negativos en el ámbito intelectual, con los homosexuales... Es el periodo de la institucionalización del país que tuvo un correlato en los medios de comunicación.

Está surgiendo también por el mundo todo ese contexto hippie que tantas contradicciones genera en todas partes; todo eso se refleja aquí también. Ya empiezan las relaciones más cercanas con el bloque socialista y empieza la prensa a parecerse a una uniformidad social que le quitó frescura y dinamismo. Y de hecho, la articulación del ‘*Quinquenio Gris*’ en la sociedad, desde el punto de vista sociocultural, tiene expresiones también en el ejercicio del periodismo. Es muy curioso, porque la radio y la TV sufren una nueva reestructuración y adquieren la misma estructura que la radiotelevisión de la URSS. Se crea lo que se llama el Palacio de la Noticia, donde se concentra en un solo lugar la radio y la televisión produciendo noticias iguales para todos los medios. Todos en una misma redacción, algo bastante absurdo e inviable que rápidamente demostró su fracaso y fue revertido. Ahí comenzaron los primeros signos de cooptación de la autonomía en el ejercicio del periodismo y su “secuestro” por las fuentes.

De hecho, ya a finales de los setenta y principios de los ochenta, cuando ya estaba claro que aquello era inviable, empieza otro proceso en la Revolución Cubana que cristaliza en los ochenta. El

acontecimiento que voltea este fenómeno es el Congreso del Partido de 1985, y el del Congreso de la UPEC en 1986. Ya desde antes, Fidel empieza lo que se llamó el 'Rectificación de Errores y Tendencias Negativas', que viene a enfrentar la copia indiscriminada de los modelos del llamado Campo Socialista y a emprender una batalla por la eficiencia económica. En ese proceso, los medios de comunicación ocupan un lugar central, que es ejercer la crítica, ir liderando todos los proyectos de reconstrucción de la mirada de la sociedad cubana nuevamente y del proceso revolucionario. Pertenezco a la generación de graduados de Periodismo en esa etapa. Me gradué en 1985, y voy a trabajar a la televisión. Coincidió que mi generación entra a trabajar en los medios de comunicación en un momento en que se está exigiendo de la prensa que sea un punto de movilización de la sociedad, a partir de la crítica, de la búsqueda de información y de su participación activa en la búsqueda de un modelo socioeconómico más eficaz.

Yo recuerdo esa etapa como una etapa de una viveza extraordinaria, en la que había un problema en La Habana, por ejemplo, y yo salía con mi cámara de reportera y perseguía al ministro que fuera necesario en la búsqueda de respuestas. Y venía, y traía la noticia. Y se conformó algo que hoy se llama hoy Sistema informativo de la Televisión Cubana, entonces se llamó Servicios informativos de la televisión cubana. Significaba que los telediaros daban las noticias de todos los temas y, después, había una programación más profunda que se encargaba de dar seguimiento a los sucesos desde la reflexión y la profundización informativa.

Se crean junto a los telediaros, un abanico de programas informativos que trataban los problemas de los trabajadores, otros los problemas de los jóvenes, otros sobre problemas sociales en general, etc. Esa estructura funcionó con bastante vitalidad en los ochenta, desde más o menos el '85 hasta aproximadamente los noventa.

Luego este fue un proceso que quedó trunco, en 1989 comienza la descomposición del campo socialista y en el discurso de Fidel del 26 de julio de 1989 en la provincia de Camagüey -que yo cubrí como reportera- Fidel dice que *si un día la Unión Soviética se desintegrara, cosa que esperamos que no suceda jamás, nosotros seguiremos aquí defendiendo el socialismo*. Eso significaba que ya era obvio todo lo que estaba sucediendo y de pronto, en los noventa, ya la Unión Soviética se desintegra.

Sara: Estaba justamente mirando ese periodo en la prensa y entre noviembre y diciembre de 1990 se habla muy poquito de lo que estaba sucediendo en la Unión Soviética. Sin embargo, a partir de enero del año siguiente la cobertura da un giro significativo, se asume el momento actual.

RC9: Exactamente. De hecho, amanecemos el 1 de enero de 1991 en 'Período Especial'. Ahí viene una etapa muy compleja. Te voy a contar mi experiencia desde la televisión. Estamos en el año '91, es decir, era muy joven todavía; me gradué con 22 años e inmediatamente fui a trabajar a la televisión. Se recorta inmediatamente la programación. Eso significa que se queda un solo noticiero en el aire, el noticiero de las 8 de la noche, la redacción de programas informativos de la televisión desaparece completamente y, por tanto, éramos muchos y había poco trabajo. De modo que se organizaron en las redacciones turnos de trabajo: unos trabajaban unos días, y otros trabajaban otros días, para que todos tuviéramos trabajo.

La política del país era no hacer despidos masivos. Como obviamente el 90% de nuestro comercio era con la Unión Soviética, el PIB bajó un 35%; no había combustible. Por tanto, apenas había automóviles, carros, etc. para ir a trabajar; teníamos que movernos como pudiéramos, muchas veces en ómnibus, otras veces en un carro que llevara a uno a un lado, a otro junto contigo hacia otra parte para intentar hacer las coberturas informativas que fueran posible... Te cuento todos estos detalles porque estos detalles fueron decisivos para lo que vino después, y la subversión que creó en la producción y en la mirada de la producción del periodismo hacia el futuro. Por otro lado, implicó un cambio total en el estilo periodístico en el

sentido de dejar de lado la problematización social para realizar un periodismo de acompañamiento al periodo de resistencia ante la crisis que estaba enfrentando el país y que ha sido llamado “Periodo Especial”.

Ahí empezaron subversiones de la producción para poder trabajar, las instituciones, que estaban un poco mejor, venían y te recogían para poder ir a hacer un trabajo (eso siempre se hizo, pero se acentúa más en ese periodo). La política informativa también cambia [ver anexo en su tesis: recorrido por la historia de lo que hoy se llama el Departamento Ideológico del Comité Central del Partido, que es quien establece los nexos con la prensa. Surge en el año '63 y hay una historia de los nombres que fue adoptando, y los distintos jefes que fue teniendo]. Esa estructura, desde el punto de vista de las mediaciones, es fundamental para entender el ejercicio del periodismo en Cuba. Esa estructura que surge en el año '63 asociada todavía a un país que no tenía un solo partido, sino que eran las organizaciones revolucionarias integradas, etc. funcionó como los nexos entre la dirección de la Revolución y los medios de comunicación. Esa estructura, que fue muy flexible, muy viable en los sesenta se fue ralentizando, en mi opinión, y verticalizando en la medida en que fue pasando el tiempo, por supuesto respondiendo a contextos determinados.

En los noventa, estas políticas informativas, que después se convertían en políticas editoriales, ¿qué suscribían, básicamente? Que era un periodo en el que había que exaltar la moral de las personas, la capacidad de resistencia; no las contradicciones el país, sino todo lo que sustentara la moral, la capacidad de defender un proyecto de nación que había que defender, y por el que había que resistir. Sin embargo, este periodo, que si bien tuvo todo esto, fue más interesante de lo que la gente presupone y menos infértil de lo que mucho aseveran. ¿Qué fue pasando después? Primero comienzan las reformas económicas de los 90 que transformaron al turismo y otros servicios como formas fundamentales de la economía. Comenzó el trabajo privado, abrieron lo que se conocen como paladares, o sea los restaurantes privados... Sucede también en este periodo ya la nueva ley de inversión extranjera, la política de inversión en el país, etc. Yo era una periodista que en esa época atendía básicamente la economía, y estaba muy inmersa en todos los procesos económicos que estaban sucediendo. En la medida en que esto fue sucediendo, que el turismo comienza a desarrollarse, empieza el país a recuperar las tiradas y programación de los medios de comunicación, y en particular de la televisión. Se recuperan de nuevo aquellos programas que se habían derogado porque no había forma de hacerlos y se intenta incluso recuperar el tono problematizador de los 80. Eso lo vas a ver muy bien descrito en mi tesis.

¿Esto qué significó? Que estos programas empiezan a recuperarse tan temprano como en el '93 y empiezan a querer recuperar el etilo de mediados de los ochenta, que era el referente más cercano de buen periodismo que se había hecho. Esto no fue posible así, tal y como lo fue en los ochenta, por varias razones: Las subversiones productivas ya introducidas, la pérdida de autonomía de la prensa y el comienzo de una desprofesionalización que después tocó fondo. Sin embargo, sí se hicieron esos intentos, y sí se intentaron acompañar todos los procesos que tuvieron que ver con las reformas económicas. De eso se informó, absolutamente. Yo recuerdo haber hecho varias veces entrevistas exclusivas de fin de año a Carlos Lage, que era el secretario del Comité Ejecutivo del Consejo de Ministros, y que era el líder de las reformas económicas. Todo esto, absolutamente, se informó. En el '94, cuando los Balseros, recuerdo en Cojímar, durante el día y la noche, entrevistando a la gente, filmando las salidas de balseros. Recuerdo perfectamente los sucesos del 5 de agosto de 1994, cómo se reportó todo de manera efectiva y abierta. Se hicieron noticieros magníficos en esos días. Por tanto, este periodo de los noventa, si bien tuvo el sesgo que ya te expliqué, fue menos infértil de lo que pudiera pensarse, porque a la vez se hizo un periodismo que acompañó los sucesos del periodo y la noticia siguió teniendo valor como razón de ser de la profesión, a la vez que valorada por todos los estratos sociales y de dirección del país.

Considero que el punto de giro, de inflexión fue 1999, de cosas evidentemente ya venían sucediendo, como la desprofesionalización, gente que emigró para otros sectores, profesionales que

emigraron del país, la subversión de las rutinas productivas... Las políticas informativas se complejizaron, en el sentido de más restricciones... Para mí, el punto de inflexión fue 1999 con la batalla política, social y mediática por el regreso del niño Elián González. Cuando en aras de una gran campaña para el regreso del niño Elián González, para lo que se movilizó toda la sociedad, empiezan a su vez restricciones muy peligrosas sobre la prensa. Por ejemplo, no podía salir nada en el noticiero de televisión si antes no salía en la Mesa Redonda (es la aparición de la Mesa Redonda), no se publicaba nada en ningún periódico hasta que la Mesa Redonda no lo suscribiera, eso por un lado. Por otro lado, empieza el gran proyecto de recuperación de la sociedad cubana llamado ‘Batalla de Ideas’, cuya política era no decir, y hacer. Pero que eso fue un mazazo para la función de los medios de comunicación. Porque, usted no dice y hace pero, ¿pero cómo se va a saber lo que hace? Ello empoderó definitivamente a las instituciones y las fuentes sobre la información y sumió en el descrédito a los medios de comunicación.

En mi opinión, esta es una tercera etapa en los medios de comunicación, que fue profundizándose en su negatividad, al punto de sustituirse las coberturas informativas, la presencia de la prensa en los acontecimientos por las notas de prensa; al punto de prácticamente desaparecer las entrevistas, al punto de desprofesionalizarse al extremo los medios de comunicación, porque los periodistas mejores, más avezados, de más experiencia, de más rigor profesional, desaparecieron. No pienso que por cuestiones económicas, pienso que más bien por cuestiones editoriales. Conozco muy bien mi generación, que es una generación todavía joven, en el sentido de que puedes funcionar en los medios de comunicación muy bien. Y esta generación prácticamente no está presente hoy en los medios de comunicación.

Sara: Eso es algo que yo he detectado en los medios.

RC9: Porque era una generación muy particular, era la generación de la explosión demográfica de los sesenta, y del modelo educativo cubano por excelencia. Por tanto, es una generación muy bien formada que entra al mercado laboral en medio de la apertura informativa de los 80. Entonces se forma en unas prácticas de ejercicio de la profesión de verdad. Y de pronto, esta realidad cambia, no abruptamente, pero sí de manera muy profunda. Y esta generación, que tenía una gran preparación y entrenamiento profesional, queda descolocada... Recuerdo que cuando llegué a la televisión, a mí me enseñaron los viejos fundadores de esta que todavía estaban allí y tenían puestos decisorios, de modo que aprendimos con rigor cómo se hacía televisión. Y es que hacer periodismo es un legado profesional; cuando desaparecen generaciones enteras desaparece un imaginario. Y mi generación desapareció prácticamente de los medios de comunicación. ¿Por qué? Porque es una generación que se empezó a articular en otros espacios pues ya aquí no tenía modo de ejercer a plenitud lo que sabía y lo que había aprendido.

Luego el 2007 lo señalo como otro punto de inflexión. Sin embargo, no creo que haya significado hasta hoy un cambio cualitativo en los medios de comunicación, porque hoy realmente la sociedad está demandando ya un cambio estructural, mucho más que una sección en un telediario o pequeñas o aisladas señales. La sociedad demanda un cambio estructural del modelo comunicativo completo y por supuesto, con autosuficiencia y autonomía económica y editorial de los medios de comunicación que forman parte de este modelo.

Sara: Tenemos entonces el VI Congreso del Partido y la Conferencia en 2012, se habla mucho del papel de los medios de comunicación para articular unas nuevas demandas sociales, nuevas políticas económicas... En el Congreso de la UPEC se critica mucho la situación de los medios de comunicación, pero también hay gente que siente cierto optimismo de que esas demandas, que quedaron un poco relegadas, puedan encontrar hoy en día el contexto adecuado para, realmente, cambiar cómo se hace periodismo en Cuba. ¿Cómo ves la situación actual?

RC9: Estos debates sobre la prensa son discusiones que, si repasas con cuidado las actas de los congresos de la UPEC, vienen haciéndose desde hace mucho tiempo. Hoy se realizan en contexto distinto con retos enormes. El primero -en mi opinión- es la premura. Ya no hay tiempo para más. Los cambios tienen que ser rápidos porque es una sociedad que tiene hoy un desgaste de muchos años de resistencia, de muchos años de trabajo duro, que ya no tiene el liderazgo de Fidel en torno a la unidad, de una resistencia muy fuerte y ya ese liderazgo no existe (de manera práctica). Hay un liderazgo de sucesiones que se frustraron; la generación histórica no define el futuro por razones obvias, por razones etarias. Hay una sucesión de liderazgos que se frustró: Carlos Lage, Felipe Pérez Roque... Hay otra que está en este momento, y que está mediando con la otra generación. De modo que yo creo que los retos son complejos en este tiempo.

Hoy la realidad comunicativa en el país cambió como en todas partes del mundo ante el desarrollo de las nuevas tecnologías y la porosidad de las sociedades actuales. Los modos de comunicación cambiaron raigalmente y ya no es posible que verticalizar o controlar la información; sencillamente no es posible. Hay que saber insertarse en ese proceso con agilidad e inteligencia. Este es un contexto socioeconómico nuevo en el que a su vez sorprende a los medios con una gran desprofesionalización por este vaciamiento que hubo y por desentrenamiento profesional.

Entonces todo esto obliga a un repensar importante de los medios de comunicación y se está haciendo. En mi opinión, más lentamente de lo que exige el momento, pero están los estudios, están los diagnósticos de qué es lo que sucede, están comisiones trabajando... De hecho, hay intentos, yo creo, por crear un periodismo más crítico, más dialógico, algunas secciones de los periódicos, de los telediaris... Pero eso no basta hoy. El modelo comunicativo es el que estalló, y dentro del viejo modelo comunicativo no valen pequeños remedios. Es necesario un modelo comunicativo otro, que siga defendiendo el proyecto de la Revolución, un proyecto solidario, un proyecto humanista, pero desde la absoluta diversidad y autonomía de los medios de comunicación. Y para mí en Cuba es posible y efectivo desarrollarlo, con una extensión mucho mayor de la comunicación popular y de la comunicación comunitaria, que es la expresión actual mucho más acabada y más cercana, al ejercicio de la verdadera democracia. Algunas experiencias en América Latina son sumamente interesantes.

¿Cómo irá ocurriendo esto en Cuba? Creo que estamos en un momento de trabajo, no estamos detenidos. Tendrán que continuar sucediéndose medidas, acontecimientos y cambios más profundos y más estructurales, que tienen que ver también con la autonomía de los medios desde el punto de vista financiero y desde el punto de vista económico. No se puede hacer televisión si no hay dinero para producirla. Y producir televisión significa que hay que conseguir financiamiento, que hay que organizar los presupuestos, que hay que organizar la estructura de los medios de comunicación de manera distinta, incluso de los presupuestos estatales. A todos los medios les corresponde un presupuesto determinado asignado por el Estado, que es el mismo. No importa si usted es una radio pequeña, de un municipio pequeño o una provincia importante y decisiva como lo es Santiago de Cuba; todos reciben igual presupuesto. Y así, una serie de deformaciones que no contribuyen a la productividad, al avance, a la construcción de identidad mediante los medios de comunicación; y mucho menos a la remuneración de los profesionales del periodismo.

Sara: Estaba leyendo la tesis de RC4. Ella elabora los principios para una ley de comunicación que recoge el consenso dentro del campo de los periodistas cubanos, que idealmente debería complementarse con un estudio sobre la percepción de los decisores políticos, y de los ciudadanos. ¿Cómo se está debatiendo la elaboración consensual de una ley de comunicación?

RC9: La ley de comunicación ya ha sido aprobada por instancias de dirección del país aunque todavía no ha ido al parlamento y aun no se ha suscitado un debate entre los profesionales de la comunicación. Una ley de comunicación, por supuesto, implica un paso importante y será efectiva en la medida en que se incluyan las regulaciones que la hagan viable. Es el resultado de una vieja

demanda del gremio profesional y del actual contexto económico y social cubano. Es imprescindible hoy como parte de la emergencia cada vez mayor de distintos actores sociales y de un modelo económico que impone radicales transformaciones que exige regular en el terreno de la comunicación. Para el periodismo implica la restructuración del sistema de medios desde su funcionamiento económico hasta el establecimiento de los límites para su ejercicio en nuestra sociedad. Porque nuestra experiencia en el ejercicio de la profesión ha sido la dependencia de presupuestos cerrados para su funcionamiento y en el plano editorial, la dependencia de las visiones, perspectivas y casi órdenes del funcionariado en ejercicio, que a su vez dependen del contexto concreto (del macro y del micro contexto). Así se han establecido las políticas editoriales, son de un modo o de otro en dependencia de lo ya apuntado; y eso es una ofensa al ejercicio del periodismo y una limitación para su función social, sobre todo si hablamos de una sociedad que no ha renunciado a su proyecto humanista y por ende no pone al mercado como decisor de las estrategias comunicativas.

La tesis de RC4, de la cual fui cotutora junto al Dr. Miguel Limia, propone principios para la creación de un modelo de gestión de la prensa cubana. ¿Cuál es la importancia de esta investigación? Este estudio levanta toda la información previa al último congreso de la Unión de Periodistas, y se analiza los debates que se hicieron en todas las delegaciones de la UPEC de Cuba. Diagnostica, en primer lugar, cuáles son los temas referentes fundamentales para los periodistas, los cruza con los problemas del contexto, con las políticas y macropolíticas nacionales e internacionales, pero además visualiza su posible (por un grupo de actores líderes en la profesión) reversión a mediano y a corto plazo. Lo impactante es que los propios profesionales tienen dudas sobre la reversión de la crisis de la prensa en Cuba a mediano plazo. Considero que el hecho de que lo estemos discutiendo con tanta fuerza y transparencia es bueno, y lo que exige es el cambio radical del modelo comunicativo cubano.

El hecho de que ya esté en marcha la aprobación de una Ley de comunicación, de que haya comisiones donde están trabajando un grupo de profesionales para aportar a la dirección del país nuestro pensamiento y propuestas significa que ya se ha reconocido que el modelo de comunicación existente estalló.

Sara: En el libro de Julio García Luis se ve muy claramente que en los ochenta también se pensaba que ya no había vuelta atrás, que ese era el momento del cambio.

RC9: Los ochenta fue una ilusión muy grande. De hecho, el slogan que dijo Fidel era ‘vamos por el camino correcto’, el proceso de ‘Rectificación de Errores’ era ese camino correcto; la convicción de que la sociedad se estaba mirando y repensando y no habría equivocaciones. Pero vino la caída del campo socialista, y eso dejó trunco ese proceso y trajo deformaciones que, perduran hasta hoy tanto en lo social como en el terreno de los medios que estamos hablando. Esta era una sociedad que, hasta los ochenta, tuvo una movilidad social que dependía de tus capacidades, de tus resultados de trabajo... Se subvirtió completamente en el ‘Período Especial’ para los sectores profesionales y trabajadores del Estado. La supervivencia del país trajo consigo otra ruptura, que fue la ruptura con la igualdad, con la justicia total. Ya tú encuentras desigualdad, que es fruto de eso mismo, y no creo que eso vaya a demasiado distinto en el futuro aun cuando el país se propone preservar sus conquistas sociales fundamentales. Yo creo que la sociedad intentará proteger a los más vulnerables, intentará ser lo más justa posible, pero ya nunca más podrá ser como antes.

Sara: Usted mencionó que cubrió asuntos económicos en los ochenta y en los noventa. ¿Cómo presentaron los medios los cambios económicos en los noventa, y cómo los presenta hoy? ¿Ha cambiado la forma de ver el cuentapropismo, las cooperativas? ¿Cómo se hablaba y cómo se habla de economía?

RC9: La apertura económica de los noventa tenía como eje fundamental la Ley de inversión extranjera que permitía la entrada de capital fresco al país, el desarrollo del turismo, que fue la estrategia principal sobre la cual se articuló la recuperación económica de esa década. Ello trajo consigo la emigración hacia ese sector emergente de una buena parte de profesionales de la educación y otros sectores y por otro lado, la desprofesionalización en nuestro sector profesional aunque no solo asociado a este fenómeno. Pero, si bien es así, es cierto que en un periodo relativamente rápido la sociedad cubana percibió una recuperación teniendo en cuenta que la economía había tocado fondo. Medidas como la aprobación del trabajo por cuenta propia, la despenalización del dólar en el '93, el surgimiento del mercado libre campesino fueron decisivas para el oxígeno económico que estaba demandando la sociedad cubana. Cuba afrontó el reto de insertarse por tercera vez en unos cincuenta años en un contexto económico distinto. Primero, antes del '59 tenía una economía básicamente dependiente de Estados Unidos que después reinsertó en el campo socialista. Después se cae el campo socialista y Cuba tiene que reinsertarse de nuevo en el mundo, sin Estados Unidos, porque el bloqueo existe. Es en esta etapa cuando justamente se arrecia más el bloqueo, con la Ley Burton y la extraterritorialidad del bloqueo, que ha hecho mucho daño a la economía cubana.

De todas maneras, todos estos cambios económicos trajeron resultados interesantes y un despertar de las potencialidades del país, esperanzadoras. Desde el punto de vista periodístico, todo eso se cubrió, se acompañaron los sucesos de este periodo, se informaron, se problematizaron incluso; sin llegar al activismo de los 80 pero sí con acceso a la información.

En estos momentos afrontamos lo que se ha dado en llamar 'Actualización del Modelo Económico'... ¿Qué paso con aquel periodo de transformación y reforma? Que después se vuelve a una nueva y profunda recentralización que tienen que ver con otro nuevo análisis de resultados que acarreo aquel modelo en cuanto a surgimiento de corrupción y descontrol económico y luego llega al gobierno Hugo Chávez en Venezuela, Cuba tiene un socio económico poderoso, la economía vuelve a un modelo de intercambio comercial mucho más favorable y, por tanto, vuelve a centralizarse. Ello con el consiguiente impacto en los medios de comunicación.

Cuba ya tenía un nuevo contexto sociopolítico, una economía mucho más estable con Venezuela y con el bloque emergente que se va creando en el cono sur latinoamericano. Entonces, eso coincide con el proyecto de 'Batalla de Ideas', que fue un proyecto, como todos los de Fidel, de una utopía extraordinaria; un bellissimo proyecto que era intentar voltear todas las deformaciones que en el plano social había dejado la profunda crisis de los años noventa. Los estudios arrojaban un blanqueamiento de las universidades, dejaron de llegar a las universidades los hijos de las familias más humildes, los negros; emergieron zonas de pobreza en la sociedad... Entonces como parte del proyecto 'Batalla de Ideas' se crea la universalización de la enseñanza, es decir que en los barrios se crearan sedes universitarias que permitieran a los jóvenes desarticulados socialmente ir a estudiar y pagarles por ello. Yo fui profesora de ese proyecto siendo periodista, muy interesante; para mí, fue una cosa extraordinaria porque eran los jóvenes más pobres de la sociedad en la universidad. Todos esos proyectos exigieron mucha cantidad de dinero y suscitaron, a la larga, un comprometimiento muy fuerte de las finanzas y de la economía del país.

Entre las reformas de los 90 y el proceso de 'Actualización del Modelo Económico' de hoy existen las diferencias de los contextos: En los noventa, cuando se crea el turismo, los cubanos tenían prohibido entrar en los hoteles. Básicamente, con el objetivo de que tributara con divisas frescas que llegaban al país. Esto, veinte años después no tenía ningún sentido. Cambiarlo era casi más una demanda democrática que una demanda económica. De hecho, es muy interesante porque el turismo nacional se ha convertido hoy en una de las entradas más fuertes de finanzas por concepto de turismo. Esto se articula alrededor del último Congreso del Partido, en el que se aprobaron los *Lineamientos de la política económica y social de la Revolución Cubana*, como parte de la actualización del modelo económico. Esta 'Actualización del Modelo Económico' significa las

transformaciones que haga viable una economía de un país y que, por otro lado, permita sustentar socialmente un proyecto humano. De modo que recoge lo más importante de los noventa, y hay cosas que aún no se han implementado como la descentralización del comercio exterior; una serie de aspectos que son imprescindibles para que la economía funcione eficazmente, pueda eliminarse la dualidad monetaria que tanto daño ha hecho a la economía cubana y sobre todo esto se revierta en una mejoría sustancial de la calidad de vida de la gente y la recuperación del valor del trabajo como fuente de vida.

Ese es el escenario de hoy, un escenario de mayor complejidad social porque hay una evidente diversificación de la sociedad y el casi unánime consenso en torno al proyecto de la Revolución que prevaleció hasta los 80 ya no es el de hoy. De modo que son dos escenarios distintos. Éste, un escenario de inserción total de Cuba en el mercado internacional. Por otro lado, está un modelo económico que está intentando ser sustentable hacia el futuro porque está siendo liderado por una generación que sabe que tiene corto tiempo de vida física e intenta dejar un proyecto más consolidado desde el punto de vista institucional para que sea perdurable. El otro escenario que marca la diferencia con los 90, es que el papel preponderante que se le otorga al trabajo privado en el modelo económico, intentando además despojarlo de cierta satanización social, no era bien mirado. En este modelo, incluso en las políticas de comunicación del gobierno te das cuenta de que intentan legitimarlo (en los noventa no).

Ahora hay una política específica, gubernamental, de que esto es legítimo, es legitimador para la sociedad, hay que apoyarlo, forma parte del contexto, no define valores humanos, no define, incluso, condiciones revolucionarias. Esto es algo distintivo de este modelo. Este es un modelo que está intentando recoger todas las áreas desde el punto de vista de las condicionantes económicas que puedan sustentar el modelo económico, para que a su vez el modelo económico pueda sustentar lo que se ha determinado, de algún modo, son las determinantes sociales que habría que proteger que son la educación, la salud, la ciencia, por supuesto lo que tienen que ver con la seguridad nacional, ese tipo de cosas, y la protección de las familias más vulnerables. Todo eso, en un contexto más complejo por la diversidad de hoy en cuanto al consenso social menos fuerte que en los noventa. Esta de hoy es incluso una sociedad más envejecida, con un alto nivel de emigración; una nueva ley migratoria que también es parte de un escenario nuevo, y era parte de una demanda social, pero que también complejiza la sociedad en general, y por último, no podemos olvidar que es una sociedad del llamado *tercer mundo*.

Additional question on 16 July 2015

Sara: ¿Cree que ha influido la reapertura de relaciones diplomáticas con Estados Unidos en el sentimiento de plaza sitiada? ¿Por qué? ¿Por qué no?

El sentimiento de plaza sitiada, como lo definiera el investigador Julio García Luis, alude a los controles de la información en torno a las medidas para proteger información sensible que llegara a Estados Unidos fundamentalmente, y presionara más las pocas y frágiles gestiones económicas y financieras que Cuba realizara para burlar el Bloqueo económico impuesto por Estados Unidos. Ello fomentó –con razón y sin ella– una pérdida de autonomía creciente de la prensa y ese sentimiento de que ante tales peligros lo mejor era callar los errores, dejar de problematizar. Por tanto, el hecho del restablecimiento de las relaciones diplomáticas con Estados Unidos en el punto en que están ahora, no añaden hasta este momento modificaciones sustanciales, por varias razones:

- Es un proceso que apenas comienza, solo se han establecido las relaciones diplomáticas.
- El Bloqueo permanece, solo algunas pocas medidas suavizan las duras restricciones contra Cuba.

- En el proceso de negociaciones en curso ambas partes han reconocido las diferencias raigales entre las perspectivas políticas de los dos gobiernos y las complejidades a afrontar para un restablecimiento normal de relaciones de intercambio.
- Los largos años de lejanía y desconfianza entre los dos países no se cambian rápidamente y ello ha sido reconocido por ambas partes.
- Porque en mi opinion, el sentimiento de plaza sitiada resulta hoy de menor importancia ante la demanda de cambios en el terreno comunicativo que exige la sociedad cubana actual.

RD10

Editor at *Juventud Rebelde*

Havana, 23 July 2015

Sara: ¿Cuáles cree que son las principales virtudes y defectos de la prensa cubana?

RD10: Yo creo que una virtud que tiene la prensa cubana, te voy a hablar luego de los defectos, es que no está movida por intereses mercantiles, o sea, está movida por principios éticos, no se mueve dentro de un mercado. Yo creo que es una ventaja el hecho de que no tenga que imponerse en el mercado. Creo que está estructurada sobre principios éticos, sobre conceptos identitarios nacionales, defiende valores sustanciales de la sociedad como la soberanía, la independencia, la justicia social. Yo diría que tampoco es una prensa que a ultranza busque lo sensacional, aunque después te voy a decir el defecto que está implícito en eso también. Es una prensa que, en sentido general, no miente; no miente abiertamente. Puede que en un momento determinado. Creo que eso son virtudes. Es una prensa que respeta la dignidad de las personas. No denigra, no utiliza los espacios para revelar intimidades de las personas, la dignidad moral de los seres humanos, como se ve en otras partes del mundo. Eso para mí es muy importante.

Defectos. Es una prensa que ha acompañado el proceso revolucionario, pero que tiene, por equis circunstancias que estaríamos un día completo hablando sobre ellas, más propaganda que periodismo en muchos casos. Hay defectos de la prensa que son propios de ella, y otros que son reflejo de la sociedad. Es una prensa que durante mucho tiempo ha reflejado el discurso de las estructuras gubernamentales, pero no ha reflejado la dinámica de la ciudadanía y sus inquietudes. Yo creo que en el contrapeso se va más por ser una vocera. A mí no me gusta la palabra oficial, porque yo no me siento oficial. Yo soy un hombre revolucionario, yo soy militante del PCC, pero yo soy RD10 por encima de todo y no me siento un periodista oficial. Me siento un periodista con un compromiso social, pero como un altavoz. Como diría Joaquín Sabina, esta boca es mía. Yo creo que ese es un defecto sustancial que ha desarrollado demasiado la propaganda, más que el periodismo. Ha sido un lenguaje demasiado oficial, administrativista. Digamos que ha mirado demasiado hacia arriba, y no siempre hacia abajo y hacia los lados.

Entre las virtudes, me faltó que es una prensa fiel a la Revolución. Lo que pasa es que, ¿qué cosa es ser fiel a la Revolución? Yo tengo mis criterios. La lealtad no puede ser el aplaudirlo todo, el justificarlo todo. Si yo te quiero, yo tengo que señalarte tus defectos. Y ha sido una prensa demasiado instrumentalista desde el punto de vista del poder. Yo creo que estamos tratando de que esa prensa tiene que llegar a ser un contrapeso de la administración del país. Un contrapeso no tiene el por qué ser de oposición. Yo no creo en la transposición de los clichés de la prensa de otras sociedades. Pero sí creo que, en el contexto cubano, la prensa tiene que ser un contrapeso de la administración pública; tiene que alentar, tiene que señalar, tiene que juzgar, tiene que prever. En ninguna parte del mundo la prensa cambia la realidad, pero sí mueve los estados de opinión, mueve las dinámicas del imaginario social. Yo creo que ese papel tiene que ser más autoregulado, y menos regulado desde afuera.

Durante muchos años, cualquier funcionario te decía qué es lo que podías decir, y qué es lo que no podías decir. Yo creo que tú tienes que tener una ética para saber qué es lo que tú debes decir, pero debe salir de ti, del periodista, del periodismo. Durante muchos años nos han negado información. En eso estamos, estamos luchando. ¿Te leíste los documentos del congreso de los periodistas?

Sara: Sí, tengo el libro de Julio, la tesis de RC4...

RD10: El libro de Julio es adelantado. Bueno, yo te diría que esos son los defectos esenciales. Ahora, te diría también que todo eso se reflejó en el lenguaje de la prensa. A veces es un lenguaje burocrático, administrativista, un lenguaje de funcionario, a veces. Hay trabajos que parecen hechos por un funcionario, no por un periodista. Creo que también hay problemas de calidad, de estilo. Hay que desarrollar más el periodismo con estilo propio y yo creo que hay que buscar, si en la economía estamos buscando la diversificación, porque estamos cambiando, hay que buscar también en el periodismo la diversificación. No en el sentido de estilos, maneras de contar, acercamiento a las cosas. No debería ser lo mismo el periódico *Granma* que el periódico *Juventud Rebelde*, que la revista *Bohemia*. Y otro defecto de la prensa es que yo noto que todavía no ha despertado a lo que ya tenemos dentro, que es un mundo alternativo de las tecnologías de la información en el cual ya hay espacios llenándose por blogs personales, que en muchos casos se adelantan a los medios tradicionales, nos están llenando espacios y nosotros estamos así mirando desde la barrera del toro. Y hay que entrar en ese mundo, hay que interactuar. Ya se acabó el mundo de los mensajes unidireccionales, estamos en un mundo en el que cualquiera ejerce la comunicación y nosotros no podemos seguir con ese concepto. Tenemos que traspasar esa barrera.

Sara: Algo que me llama la atención es que los problemas del periodismo cubano se saben desde hace décadas. ¿En el Congreso de la UPEC de 1986? se establecen claramente cuáles son los problemas del periodismo cubano. Si uno lee el libro de Julio, parece que el periodismo cubano vaya a cambiar ya en la década de los 80. Sin embargo, no parece que ese cambio haya tenido lugar. En su opinión, ¿qué ha causado esa demora?

RD10: Yo creo que primero cambiar un país es una labor muy compleja. Un país cambia, nosotros podemos incluso lograr mejorar la economía, lograr un poquito de prosperidad, de sustentabilidad económica, pero cambiar esto que está aquí dentro (señala su cabeza) es más difícil. Yo creo que, fíjate, no me gusta ser absoluto. En la prensa cubana hay muestras de ejercicio muy audaz de las temáticas, pero no puedo decir que son generales. Yo te podría decir que hay un periódico en Sancti-Spiritus que se llama Escambray. ¿Lo has consultado? Hay un director ahí que es diputado de la Asamblea Nacional. Es un director bajo las mismas reglas y conceptos porque en Cuba la prensa responde a un concepto social diferente, unipartidista. Lo que pasa es que en el unipartido donde yo estoy, yo ejerzo mi diversidad. Y además, hacia eso debemos ir, porque nosotros si tenemos un sólo partido que rige la sociedad como vanguardia, tenemos que también mirarnos por dentro como un partido para pensar. Que si tenemos que el entorno de un solo partido, tenemos que seguir abriendo las exclusas de la diversidad. Yo creo que la economía se está diversificando y en el arte eso se refleja más. En el arte, en el cine, en la literatura, pero en el periodismo todavía hay demasiada cerrazón, demasiadas puertas cerradas. Yo creo que estamos avanzando. Yo soy miembro de la presidencia nacional de la Unión de Periodistas de Cuba e hicimos un estudio en el cuál propusimos un modelo hacia un modelo de periodismo diferente; un periodismo revolucionario, pero con una autonomía mayor desde el punto de vista económico, incluso, que no tengamos que ser subvencionados por nadie, y que a la vez, donde se le pague a los talentos y no vivamos el igualitarismo que vivimos todavía. Cuba está transitando de un concepto paternalista. Tú eres excelente trabajadora y yo soy un descarado y tú y yo vivimos más o menos igual. Entonces, la injusticia es continua. Todavía en Cuba hay gente que sin trabajar, vive. Porque el Estado todavía te protege en algunas cosas. Yo creo que ese modelo está propuesto, un modelo en el cuál incluso se incluya la publicidad de productos cubanos, se disminuya la carga presupuestaria del Estado y el medio pueda valerse más por sí mismo por distintas vías, ofreciendo servicios a la Sociedad y cobrándolos. Y además, poniendo publicidad. Todo eso está en un estudio y parece que se va a aplicar.

Pero además, hay que cambiar la concepción. Nosotros no podemos ser voceros de las instituciones. Nosotros debemos ser un organismo vivo. No tenemos por qué ser un organismo de la oposición política deliberada. Yo no me siento un opositor al gobierno, pero yo no soy un vocero oficial. ¿Me explico? Incluso mi columna tiene 17 años. Para mí, mi columna es un ejercicio de la democracia todos los días. De que los que están ahí tengan que escuchar las quejas, las opiniones, las demandas de los ciudadanos y tengan que responder. Por ejemplo, hoy salió el fiscal general de la república y respondió a una queja de una madre. En la sección no siempre se resuelven los problemas, hay respuestas que son sesgadas, que son instrumentales. Una cosa que no atendiste durante mucho tiempo entonces, en cuanto sale, van para allá y arreglan el asunto. Me responden, y entonces yo les tengo que responder, pero bueno, ¿por qué hubo que esperar a que se publicara, por qué los mecanismos no están creados? Hay un pensamiento de José Martí que dice: 'Gobernar es prever'. Y ese principio yo lo esgrimo todo el tiempo. No pueden estar las instituciones a la zaga.

Yo te decía que ese director del periódico Escambray, cada vez que me encuentro con él, le digo: Compadre, parafraseando una canción de Pablo Milanés que dice, 'no es perfecta más se acerca'. Le digo, tú no eres perfecto, compadre, pero te acercas a lo que yo siempre soñé en mi director. Porque él siempre ha publicado investigaciones sobre temas, sobre los cambios que está haciendo el país traen nuevos problemas. Desde la dialéctica, yo soy un marxista convencido. La dialéctica, la unidad de lucha del contrario. Las nuevas soluciones que necesita el país traen nuevas realidades problemáticas. Entonces, tú no puedes acomodarte pensando, los lineamientos se están aplicando... No, tienes que estar ahí mirando los lineamientos cómo se aplican, para ver qué se distorsiona. Por ejemplo, hay cambios que se están dando, acuérdate que en Cuba Máximo Gómez dijo que o nos quedábamos cortos o nos pasábamos. Entonces, por ahí podemos caer en el paternalismo, que personas ancianas que lo dieron todo por esta Revolución en este momento tienen un límite ya de supervivencia que tienes que atender, porque ellos fueron leales, fieles a esto. Sostuvieron este país en los momentos más difíciles y ahora están en el momento de declive de su vida. Entonces, yo creo que ese es el papel. Yo te decía que ese director ha publicado trabajos sobre temas de corrupción mucho más audaces que los de los órganos nacionales, ha publicado temas sobre los bolsones de vulnerabilidad que crean las nuevas medidas, que hay que atender, hay que alentar, hay que tener un observatorio crítico de las consecuencias de las medidas para paliarlas. Esto no es cambiar y desempalzar la economía. El Estado tiene que seguir teniendo una responsabilidad sobre los ciudadanos, y sobre todo sobre los ciudadanos vulnerables, como los ancianos solos. Con esto te digo que hay mucha autocensura. Actualmente, el Partido tiene menos tutelaje sobre los medios de prensa, mucho menor que antes. Y como decimos acá, la pelota está dentro de las redacciones. Los editores y los directores. Y eso es una realidad palpable. Si un editor tiene mucho miedo porque cree que el trabajo es fuerte y que puede traerle problemas, primero tú tienes que dar el paso al frente para que tus periodistas sean más audaces. Pero además, estar con un fusil mirando la realidad. El periodismo es una aventura analítica en la cual usted tiene un equilibrio, usted ve las cosas feas y las cosas buenas, y usted, además, se acerca a la realidad a través de las fuentes.

Por ejemplo, uno de los defectos que tenemos nosotros es que absolutizamos las fuentes institucionales y no las fuentes civiles, no oficiales, las fuentes populares. Si vamos a hacer un trabajo de la agricultura o la industria, cómo voy a ir a hablar con el ministro nada más y no ver a los obreros ahí abajo, qué piensan de lo que sea. Yo pienso que estamos en un momento de cambio, y si no cambiamos perecemos. Nos inundan los blogs, los discursos de afuera, los discursos que tenemos aquí adentro que están intentando dinamitar completamente el orden social. Yo creo que el orden social hay que mejorarlo, hay que democratizarlo más, hay que liberarlo de muchas trabas, pero no tiene que desaparecer. Porque ese es como el cuento de botar el sofá. Un hombre al que la mujer le era infiel y nunca lo aceptó. Un día entró a su casa y pilló a su mujer con el amante en el sofá, y lo que hizo fue botar el sofá por el balcón. Eso en Cuba es botar el sofá. No ir a la raíz de los problemas. Pero además, el problema no es botar el orden social, que ha costado mucho y que no todo es malo, que tiene virtudes que defender todavía, esenciales, como que todos los niños tienen derecho a ir a la escuela. Ah, pero tú tienes que cambiar muchas cosas, y la prensa tiene que

cambiar. Claro, hay una responsabilidad social. Porque yo no creo que se resuelva todo con una perestroika que dinamite la sociedad completamente, porque yo miro a esa escuela que está frente aquí, frente a este edificio, y todos los días respeto el trabajo de la educación cubana, de la salud pública, con los defectos y con los deterioros que ha tenido. Lo que quiero decirte con esto es que hay que hacer un periodismo más audaz, más de contrapeso. Es la palabra. Más de decirle a los que toman las decisiones, oiga miren, esto aquí está complicadito. Estoy está por acá, esto está frenado por aquí... Hay mucha resistencia.

En Cuba se está generando una resistencia muy grande a los cambios. A los cambios que incluso... Tú oyes hablar al presidente cubano, que según otros códigos es un dictador. Tú sabes que a nosotros nos han indicado que todos son dictadores, esto es una sociedad monolítica...

Cuba ha sido muy vilipendiada. Y Cuba, ni es tan -a ver, a ver cómo lo digo-. Cuba no es tan ideal ni tan perfecta como sus seguidores en el mundo la pintan, pero no es tan demoniaca como sus enemigos la pintan. Cuba ha alcanzado muchas virtudes, hay una capacidad de pensar en la gente - aunque hay imbéciles en todos lados-. Hay gente que, con la globalización, cree que el mundo es un éxito, gente que cree que yéndose para Miami, eso es el paraíso. Pero en Cuba hay muchos años de un sedimento cultural, de un sedimento de capacidad de pensar. Yo creo que eso no se puede negar. No sé si te estoy hablando un poco incoherentemente.

Sara: Vamos un poquito atrás. ¿Dónde estaba usted entre los años 85-90?

RD10: Yo, hasta el 86, trabajé en el periódico Trabajadores. Y en el 86 entré en *Juventud Rebelde* hasta hoy.

Sara: ¿Cómo se vivieron los debates durante el periodo de 'Rectificación de Errores', y luego, con la disolución de la Unión Soviética?

RD10: La 'Rectificación de Errores' fue como pasar de la Edad Media al Renacimiento. Bueno, no es así. Lo que te quiero decir es que el 'Rectificación de Errores' fue, antes de que viniera la crisis del socialismo europeo... Yo creo que la dirección del país, yo creo que Fidel Castro se dio cuenta de que estábamos acumulando una serie de defectos y de problemas estructurales y funcionales en la sociedad que estaban estancando el modelo socialista cubano. Y vino, en aquel congreso, se hizo un llamamiento. Realmente fue muy democrático. En los centros de trabajo, en las cuadras, la gente opinó de todo, de lo posible y de lo imposible. Eso se ha hecho mucho aquí, los que nos tildan de que Cuba es una sociedad... Aquí se ha debatido mucho del imperfecto socialismo cubano. Fue un momento de mucha esperanza de que las cosas tenían que cambiar, de que los métodos de dirección no podían ser desde arriba nada más. Yo sigo pensando que hay que empoderar todavía mucho a la soberanía en el sentido de darle peso en el control de los asuntos bajo la máxima martiana aquella de 'gobernar con todos y para el bien de todos'. Esa fue una etapa lamentablemente sesgada por la desaparición del campo socialista. Yo te diría que nosotros importamos defectos de la praxis del socialismo europeo y todavía tenemos que quitarnos unos cuantos. Nosotros nos insertamos en un mundo en el que no teníamos alternativa, porque el país sucumbía y la Unión Soviética apareció para ayudarnos. Éramos socialistas y llegamos al socialismo, pero no con los tanques metidos aquí, como pasó en otros países. Nosotros llegamos al socialismo por la misma confrontación. Estados Unidos nos llevó al socialismo. Si no hubieran sido tan tercicos, igual habiéramos llegado hasta aquí siendo un tipo de democracia de centro-izquierda. Pero te quitan las cuotas azucareras, nacionalizas, y cuando llegas a ver, te das cuenta de que eres socialista por los sesos. Entonces, aquella crisis, eso fue muy triste. Este país dio una prueba, yo diría que eso la historia tendrá que analizarlo, porque aquel dominó que cayó así, y ¿por qué Cuba no desapareció? Eso es un misterio. Lo que pasamos aquí, tú no te lo puedes imaginar. Algo unió, la historia lo dirá, porque si no hubiera caído esto. Algo había, algo ha habido que nos ha traído hasta aquí. Una especie de intuición o certeza, una especie de unión basada en principios esenciales que entramó la Revolución. Un muchacho de 21

años no piensa como yo, pero yo crecí mi infancia, y yo era de gente acomodada y mi familia fue afectada por las leyes revolucionarias. Sin embargo, yo aprendí. Mi padre me dijo: Descendimos nosotros para que muchos ascendieran. Vino esa etapa en la que Cuba se quedó solita, naufragando, solitaria. Porque además, Cuba ha ayudado a tanta gente, pero no todos han sido muy agradecidos.

Había que reconstruir un país. La fórmula, primero, fue repartir equitativamente la penuria. Pero había que hacer cambios a la larga, a veces duros. Y Cuba empezó a abrirse al mundo. Este país nunca fue tan cerrado como los socialistas europeos. Nosotros siempre vimos filmes occidentales, escuchamos música occidental, además este país tiene otra vocación de isla, abierto. Los soviéticos empezaron a desayunarse cuando se cayó el muro, y a ver cómo era el mundo. Yo fui uno de los pocos periodistas cubanos y me mandaron por uno de los convenios que tenía la *Nuoti*, una agencia oficial que invitaba siempre a un periodista cubano para que hiciera reportajes allá. Ya en los últimos meses de Gorbachov yo creo que fui el último. Cuando llegué, todavía estaba el PCUS y Gorbachov al frente, pero ya no estaban ya. Inaugurando *McDonalds*, las fotos de *Rocky* grandes, así. Yo sabía lo que era *Rocky* porque yo aprendí a pensar. Yo sabía que *Rocky* es la metáfora del poder y la fuerza. Yo sabía lo que es la *fast food*, aunque no la tenía aquí, pero nosotros estábamos informados y aquellos pobres rusos estaban como obnubilados con el capitalismo. Yo me acuerdo que escribí una crónica que salió y que se llamaba: *Opus y el Pato Donald* caminan conjuntos. Yo había estaba en el año 78 y ya no entendía nada, ya me di cuenta de que eso desapareció.

Yo creo que todo lo que pasó en el socialismo europeo nos ha servido a nosotros, pero todavía nos tiene que servir más. No tenemos que perder tanto tiempo para darnos cuenta, para quitarnos el lastre, para poder seguir siendo socialistas en el siglo 21. También hemos tenido que aprender de otro socialismo del siglo 21. Tenemos que pegarle la oreja a procesos como los de Ecuador, como los de Bolivia, como los de Venezuela en América Latina. Con sus problemas, pero que tienen otra concepción. Que están tratando de construir el socialismo dentro de una sociedad multipartidista, pero han logrado movilizar a la gente con otro concepto. ¿Cuál? Lo que te decía, esos años fueron muy duros, y la prensa fue la primera impactada. Este periódico era diario, y dejó de ser diario. Nos quedamos un grupo de gente. Otros fueron para la radio, nos quedamos un grupo de gente aquí, con una edición a la semana. (Inciso personal).

Sara: Por lo que cuentas, parece que tanto la población como el Partido se centraron en la supervivencia.

RD10: Claro, la prioridad material era tan grave. Entonces, han pasado los años. Yo soy una persona crítica, me caracteriza eso. Y además, eso tiene un precio. Yo no soy complaciente. Me respetan y saben que soy un revolucionario, pero un revolucionario inconforme. Me respetan profesionalmente, pero no soy de los pegaditos. Estos años nos dieron la medida de que claro, el sistema socialista es un sistema muy joven todavía, incluso desde el 17 de Lenin, frente a un sistema capitalista de siglos que ha desarrollado los conceptos de la democracia representativa. Nosotros tenemos que desarrollar los mecanismos de la democracia socialista, que todavía está en ciernes. Porque este país tuvo un liderazgo muy fuerte. Fidel representó muchas cosas para Cuba. Pero Cuba tiene que prepararse, ya incluso el tránsito de Fidel se dio de la forma más inteligente, en vida. Pero este país tiene que prepararse para vivir con el consenso de todos y quizás sin la fuerza de una personalidad tan poderosa que simbolizaba un pueblo. Yo creo que la historia lo analizará. Nosotros estamos muy cerca para analizarlo. A lo mejor la historia le señala cosas, pero estoy convencido de que la historia tendrá que ser justa para valorar lo que ese hombre hizo. Detrás de él ha habido un pueblo, ¿me entiendes? Fue una época diferente en ese sentido.

¿Cómo desarrollar el mecanismo de la democracia dentro del socialismo? Esa es todavía una asignatura pendiente. Y dentro de eso, está la prensa. Los años 90 fueron muy duros y, sin embargo, en los años 90 hay atisbos de un periodismo que abordó las problemáticas de la supervivencia, pero

también de los problemas sociales que se empezaron a acumular. Yo te diría que aún hoy, nuestro periodismo tiene una cantidad tremenda de agendas públicas y ciudadanas pendiente.

Yo soy un periodista que ha hecho de todo, pero me llamaron para esta sección, que es muy popular aquí en Cuba y yo me he creído que yo estoy ejerciendo la democracia. Yo me lo he creído. Después igual me dicen, qué comemierdas tú eres. Pero yo me he creído que al ciudadano hay que darle voz. Todos los días, yo me siento aquí y me leo cincuenta, o sesenta cartas. Y no es una sección en la que se pone la cosita, como en otros periódicos del mundo. Yo proceso las cartas, las paso por mis ojos, por mi entendimiento, por mi corazón. Me inmiscuyo en los problemas. Yo atiendo problemas humanos. Aquí hay periodistas que atienden deportes, cubana. Mi agenda es 'problemas de la gente'. A parte de que, de vez en cuando, ejerzo el columnismo de opinión sobre temas de la realidad que no siempre son bienvenidos, y a veces tengo que bombardear la censura. A veces he dicho, no, no se va a publicar eso. ¡Porque si me van a hacer cambios! Por eso me quiero crear mi blog para eso, para que cuando no me quieran publicar, publico mi blog y ¡al carajo!

Yo creo que estamos contra el tiempo ya, en un conteo regresivo. Si la prensa cubana tradicional, la que le dicen la oficial (a mí no me gusta oficial, porque yo no soy oficial) no modifica su modelo, nos van a tragar los sitios web. Eso es una alerta que estamos haciendo, lo estamos diciendo para arriba para que la dirección del país se dé cuenta, porque yo, ¿en qué mejor lugar puedo trabajar que en este periódico, y no tener que colaborar con *OnCuba* magazine para poder decir unas cuantas cosas más? No es que diga que *OnCuba* magazine es contrarrevolucionario, no creo eso, pero escribe con un poco más de libertad, en el sentido de que se sienten más sueltos. Entonces la prensa cubana revolucionaria tiene que asumir la vanguardia del debate público, porque si no, otros lo van a hacer. Otros. Y cuando te hablo de la prensa revolucionaria, no te estoy hablando de oportunistas, de lamebotas. Te estoy hablando de periodistas que sienten por el país, que quieren que este país se salve. Si desaparece esta sociedad, lo que va a venir (bueno, yo no voy a estar porque ya tengo 62 años). Entonces, nosotros no podemos estar perdiendo el tiempo. Hay que cambiar el modelo. Lo he dicho en el Congreso de la UPEC, lo he dicho en el Partido, lo digo donde sea. Hay que convertir al periodismo en un contrapeso de las instituciones. No es un contrapeso opositor, es un contrapeso, una mirada diferente que sirva a los que toman las decisiones para aterrizar, para poner los pies ahí abajo. Para pararse en el camino y pensar, para ver los posibles escenarios que puedan sobrevenir. Todas esas cosas.

Sara: Algunos de sus compañeros mencionaron términos que me hicieron mucha gracia, como la 'brujería poética', el 'lirismo agropecuario'. ¿Qué significan estos términos, me lo podría explicar?

RD10: Nuestro periodismo tiene que desoficializarse. Para ser revolucionario, no hay que estar pegado a las instituciones. Hay que quizás ser una contrapartida con voz propia. Esa práctica, de ser pasivos voceros de las instituciones y los organismos, derivó en que periodistas dijeran: No, yo atiendo la salud pública, yo atiendo el ministerio de la agricultura. No, tú atiendes la agricultura cubana, con sus problemas, que son bastantes. Una fuente tuya es el Ministerio de Agricultura, y otra fuente son los agricultores, y otra fuente son las amas de casa cuando tienen que servir la mesa. O sea, una cantidad de información, de relación con las fuentes, una relación complaciente con las fuentes de muchos periodistas, de que yo te cito para tal cosa, te llevo por tal recorrido, al que yo le digo pastoreo, un rebaño; yo te enseño lo bueno que después tú ya... Todas esas cosas crearon muchas deformaciones. El lirismo agropecuario es, a ver... Hemos llegado al extremo de hacer el ridículo en el sentido de tratar de ver belleza y poesía en cualquier cosa. En los géneros periodísticos se produjo también un proceso de descapitalización en el periodismo. En todos esos años del 'Período Especial', mucha gente improvisaba dentro del periodismo. La crónica, por ejemplo, es un género muy especial, muy hermoso. Yo he hecho muchas crónicas. Es un género en el cuál tú cuentas una historia y la pasas por tu vida, por tus ojos, por tus sensaciones. Entonces, hubo gente que quería hacer crónicas de cualquier cosa: de una reunión, de una asamblea, de cosas burocráticas. Te decía que en este país hay una resistencia, hay una burocracia que es en este

momento... El presidente de Cuba ha hecho alusiones a la resistencia burocrática. Hay una burocracia formada en el socialismo que se está convirtiendo en la retranca de los cambios. Porque yo no estoy en el pensamiento del presidente cubano, pero creo ver en lo que él expresa que él se da cuenta de que Cuba tiene que cambiar para incluso preservar el socialismo. Que tiene que cambiar muchas cosas, y que tenemos que convivir con realidades que antes nos parecían lejanas. Por ejemplo, el mismo hecho de que formas no estatales empiecen a aparecer en un país que en el año 68 eliminó hasta la venta del puestecito, el socialismo más ortodoxo eliminó hasta la venta privada de cualquier cosita. Un país que ha tenido que darse cuenta de que el Estado no puede hegemonizarlo todo. Y el presidente ha pedido comprensión y ayuda a esas formas no oficiales, oficialmente, en discursos y asambleas. Pero cuando tú vas a la realidad, aquí hay una burocracia que en este momento está convirtiéndose en la retranca de los cambios, en la resistencia a los cambios. Porque cuando tú la elimines, ¡madre mía! La burocracia está tratando de sobrevivir. Por eso el Estado se está quitando cosas de arriba, el estado no debe administrar una pizzería, todo eso debe ser particular. Ah, contrólalo por la vía fiscal. Pero además, deja a los ciudadanos emprender. Y es lo que se está haciendo. ¿Has ido a paladares en La Habana? ¡Qué belleza! ¡Qué buen gusto! Eso lo necesitamos nosotros. El socialismo ha sufrido mucho porque primero Lenin, que era el hombre que estaba poniendo en práctica las ideas de Marx y Engels, que tiene una vigencia tremenda porque en Cuba hay gente que no quiere ni oír hablar ya de marxismo. Lenin murió muy temprano, y murió en medio de una pugna esencial en la cual quien tomó el mando, es trememundos. Que los más ortodoxos dicen, salvó a la Unión Soviética, pero a costa de cercenar muchas libertades individuales, de cosas forzosas, de voluntarismo, y el socialismo no sirve para eso. El socialismo tiene sentido en la medida en que sea para ser más pleno, para disfrutar más de la vida. Yo no quiero el socialismo de la Corea de Kim il Sung. Eso, para mí no es socialismo. Esos son los grandes problemas que se han trasladado.

Yo creo que el país está en un momento decisivo. En este país hay mucha gente que ha magnificado el acercamiento a Estados Unidos, la normalización. Los problemas tenemos que resolverlos nosotros. Los problemas de eficacia, de eficiencia, de participación ciudadana, de más democracia socialista, pero más democracia, tenemos que resolverlo nosotros porque a aquellos no les interesa esto, ellos quieren que desaparezca por otros medios más inteligentes y sutiles, desde dentro. Date cuenta de que la estrategia ahora no es la invasión, es la implosión desde adentro. La Primavera Árabe, todo eso es una estrategia de los centros de poder de este mundo. Lo que está pasando en Ucrania, fue preparado desde adentro. Ahora, lo que viene para nosotros es mucho. El pueblo tiene muchas personas inteligentes, tiene gente necia también que ahora puedes ver una banderita americana en algunos autos y eso y yo me revuelvo. ¿Tú sabes por qué? Los taxistas porque así creen que ganan más. ¡Y son razones tan banales! Los americanos se van a montar en mi almendrón, pero puede haber también un punto ¡Ah, que los americanos vienen a salvarnos! Y ahí es donde nosotros, la prensa, juega un papel importante.

Ya yo escribí un artículo que se llamaba... Hay un poeta cubano que se llama Bonifacio Byrne, que cuando la ocupación... Sabes que cuando la guerra con España terminó, Estados Unidos...

Es que la relación de Cuba con Estados Unidos es única, es una relación de amor odio muy grande. Es única en América. La obsesión de Estados Unidos con Cuba es enfermiza durante toda la historia. Hace poco se publicó un libro de un norteamericano. Ese poeta cubano llegó después del 98, en el Morro estaba la bandera americana izada porque estuvimos ocupados por EEUU dos años, y después una segunda ocupación después de que habíamos luchado tanto. Entonces, él entró en una fragata, volvió del exilio y escribió un poema que decía: volver de distante rivera con el alma enlutada y sombría, afanoso busqué mi bandera y otra he visto en lugar de la mía. ¿Dónde está mi bandera cubana, la bandera más bella que existe?...

Entonces, yo escribí un artículo que salió hace creo que cuatro meses, '¿Dónde está mi bandera cubana?'. Y era un artículo nada... no era una arremetida, era como una especie de mirada preocupante sobre cómo había visto banderas del Barça, banderas inglesas ahora con el mundial,

banderas norteamericanas y, sin embargo, me costaba trabajo ver mi bandera. La bandera por la cual hemos llegado hasta aquí. Y entonces hablaba de que ahora, parar un cubano, conseguir una bandera tiene que pagar en divisas, y es muy cara. Y sin embargo, tenemos el peligro de que nos invadan de iconos ajenos. Yo no le pedí permiso a nadie, ni tengo que pedir permiso al Comité Central del Partido para defender lo que yo considero mi identidad. Yo escribí eso y me lo publicaron aquí. Ahora, no te voy a decir que todo lo que escribo, me lo publican. No te voy a decir que a veces la directora me dice mira, esta expresión aquí. A veces cedo porque la esencia del trabajo, para mí, es más importante. A veces me liman el estilo mío pero digo, bueno, está bien, esta palabrita es medio agresiva, para que salga el trabajo. Pero también yo llevo años y se me respeta.

Sara: Se habla de la desprofesionalización del periodismo cubano, y el hecho de que los jóvenes no tengan la garra necesaria para llegar al fondo de los asuntos, que no tienen suficiente experiencia como para que las fuentes hablen o, si no hablan, conseguir igualmente la información.

RD10: Mira, yo te voy a poner un ejemplo. Yo hice un trabajo -por eso es tan importante el equilibrio-. Aquí hay una muchacha que es muy buena, que lleva solamente dos años de graduada, Susana. Hicimos una serie ella y yo sobre las cooperativas nuevas que han aparecido. Ella fue conmigo y nos complementamos porque yo sabía que eso era una realidad muy compleja naciente y todavía hay gente en ciertas esferas que quiere administrar la información. Había que hilar fino para reflejar, para acercarse a eso con una mirada muy integral. ¿Por qué? Porque es una nueva forma económica que se está estrenando y además nosotros teníamos que demostrar que valió la pena crear las cooperativas de bienes y servicios, porque al Estado se quita eso de arriba y fiscalmente lo que hace es ingresar por impuestos. El socialismo tiene que resolver el problema del sentido de la pertenencia, esto es mío, mío, mío y mío. Entonces, la cooperativa se reparte. No puede venir ningún dirigente de arriba a decir lo que ellos tienen que hacer. Es más democrático, más avanzado. Cuba es más democrática ahora. Ellos deciden. Ah, ellos tienen dificultades, no pueden importar directamente; tienen que lograr, a través de las empresas importadores estatales, que les garantice los insumos, no hay un mercado mayorista. Ese trabajo era muy complejo porque había que reportar que la gente vive mejor y gobierna más sus asuntos. Eso le molesta a cierta burocracia, y se le va de las manos. Y por otro lado había que señalar los problemas que confronta esa nueva forma de gestión. Esa muchachita sola no podía. Lo hicimos entre los dos. Ella aprendió en el reportaje, y también le aportó su visión joven, sus preguntas eran muy buenas. Los muchachos no se pueden dejar solos, porque están un poco indefensos y entonces cualquier funcionario les niega la información. Pero ellos son fuertes y además tenemos que contar con ellos, y tenemos que crearles las condiciones porque si no, se nos van de la prensa. Se nos van para otros sitios alternativos que están desarrollando otro periodismo. Nosotros tenemos que seducir, aunque creemos que ya los tenemos ahí se graduaron. Si no se sienten motivados, se van a los dos años después de cumplir el servicio social. Es muy complejo, y eso no todos los directores de los medios de prensa cubana han dado ese paso, han avanzado, y están preparados. Eso que Julio García decía.

Hoy publiqué lo que el fiscal general de la república me respondió. Eso es democracia. Porque tampoco podemos creeros ahora que las formas no estatales de gestión no necesitan también control, porque hay gente que se cree que ahora es la libre empresa, la selva amazónica del capitalismo.

(Historia de una carta: Un hombre que fabrica camas metálicas y las pinta en la calle, que tiene la licencia mal dada porque no ha demostrado respeto a criterios ambientales. Una mujer le escribe diciéndole que tiene dos niños con problemas respiratorios, y le ha llamado varias veces la atención al señor).

Cuba tiene problemas de control sobre muchas cosas. Eso es un peligro que estamos señalando también. De ahí a la ingobernabilidad, podemos pasar. Aquí se permiten muchas cosas, y eso que dicen que nosotros vulneramos los derechos humanos. Este es un país donde la gente hace lo que le

da la gana, y eso es un problema. (Continúa la historia de la carta). Aquí existen las estructuras, pero son muy lentas. Existe muy poca resolutive para acompañar a los ciudadanos en sus demandas frente a alguien que los está afectando, por ejemplo, una empresa oficial. Los ciudadanos se quedan indefensos, y por eso estoy yo. Y por eso no le caigo bien a mucha gente.

Tengo un programa en Canal Habana, Papelitos Hablan, que es también de cartas. Ahí interactúo con los ciudadanos y con las instituciones. Hablo y digo lo que quiero de las cosas. Entonces, la mujer me escribe y me dice: ya llegué aquí en Guantánamo al límite, nadie se preocupa de mi problema. Fallo de la sociedad cubana. Por eso yo soy una ignición, una propulsión porque yo pongo, eso no lo digo públicamente, pero cada vez que saco un caso estoy revelando vulnerabilidades de nuestra sociedad, del sistema de atención pública, y estoy mandando correr a gente. Y eso tiene un precio también. Hay gente que, gracias a que yo he resuelto su problema, vienen a traerme regalos, o vienen a invitarme a su restaurante particular. Yo no puedo ir. Soy un personaje público, y mi vida tiene que ser con mi salario, y justo. Porque hay muchos ojos que te están midiendo. Te están midiendo, y no es para Roma. Fíjate cuántas potencialidades de la democracia, a veces, están retenidas. Porque allí en el municipio tendrían que haber puesto a ese hombre en su lugar. El fiscal general responde que se le dio la orden a la fiscalía provincial de investigar el caso. ¿Cómo cuando tú tienes poder, tú tienes la potestad de arreglar las cosas y no dejarlas pasar? La fiscalía de Guantánamo hizo la investigación, son inspectores públicos para todos. Esos inspectores, unos son corruptos y se dejan chantajear, y otros son acomodados y dejan pasar las cosas. En este caso, la mujer había ido a la DISE, la Dirección de Seguridad e Inspección. Hoy, el fiscal general de la república responde a esta sección. Se investigó y el hombre no tenía licencia ambiental, se le quitó la licencia para el negocio, se sancionó a los directivos a los cuerpos de inspectores que hicieron la vista gorda, es decir, se tomaron una serie de medidas. Y yo hoy soy un poquito más feliz.

Yo no soy muy feliz, porque yo vivo tocando los problemas del país todos los días. Hay periodistas que están sentados allí, en la redacción. Pero yo estoy aquí pegado. Dicen que hay enviados especiales, yo soy un quedado especial. Yo no viajo por ninguna cosa porque como toco problemas... Pero en esa sección, yo no dejo de poner lo que a veces la gente me manda. En este país, se salva la vida a personas humildes todos los días, que no es así en todos los países de América Latina, ni siquiera en países ricos. Con todos los problemas, Cuba ha creado un sistema de salud que es de libre acceso. Que a lo mejor te falta tal, eso es verdad. Pero lo que es una verdad como un raíl de línea no se dice ahí. Que cada vez que llega una carta que dice, mi hijo tiene un implante para los niños sordos, que en Cuba hay más de 500, se les pone un implante, y llegan a oír. Entonces la madre te escribe y te dice agradecida que no le ha costado nada. Yo pongo eso. Como pongo lo terrible, tengo que poner lo sublime. O cuando por ejemplo, en un hotel un turista dejó un equipaje que tenía 28.000 dólares, y se le quedó extraviado - extraño-. Y esa persona lo dejó un asiento de un hotel. Imagínate tú para cualquier cubano qué cosa es 28.000 dólares. Y una persona recogió eso y esperó a que apareciera el turista que había salido. Ese turista me hizo la carta, ¿cómo yo no voy a publicar eso? Yo escribo la historia y digo, quizás fulana no tenía ni cien pesos cubanos en su billetera. Esas cosas que son virtudes del cubano.

Por ejemplo, hay veces que hay medicamentos que no los hay en el país. Yo he publicado alguno de esos, y aparece solidaridad entre la gente. Yo he publicado cartas de reclusos presos. Hace bastantes años publiqué una carta de un hombre bastante joven que me escribió diciéndome: estoy cumpliendo una pena de veinte años -para tener veinte años e pena en Cuba hay que haber matado a alguien. He hecho un análisis, ya llevo ocho años en la cárcel, yo he dado un viraje en mi vida, yo he cometido muchos errores, pero he recapitado, y soy esencialmente un hombre bueno. Hay un sistema de reeducación que, si te portas bien, te recortan la condena. Yo publiqué esa carta hace años. El hombre me dice, yo tengo mucha preocupación por cuando salga de la cárcel, para pedir trabajo. Mis amigos y mi familia me han abandonado, nadie viene a verme en la cárcel. Yo sé que su sección no es para buscar amigos, pero su usted publica la dirección de mi penal yo quiero hacer

amistad con personas que me ayuden a ser mejor persona. Yo espero que si usted publica eso va a haber una reacción. Yo publico la carta, no textual, pasada por mí RD10 narra cómo escribió la carta). Yo le digo a fulano que sé que esas cartas van a aparecer, siempre hay un alma generosa que no se prejuicia. Además, usted fulano tiene que saber que usted es un ser humano con los mismos derechos, con las mismas condiciones. El hombre hierra, pero usted es un ser humano igual que los que estamos del lado de acá de la reja. Digo aquéllo y empiezan a llegar las cartas, los correos electrónicos. Hay una cosa en periodismo que se llama seguimiento. Una segunda parte la dediqué a las personas que ya habían respondido rápidamente. En una semana recibí 37 cartas de personas de distintos rincones del país. Fui escribiendo todo eso, que cómo usted va a perder la esperanza, que la vida es una sola...

Publico aquéllo y, ¡tuvo un impacto! El problema es que el periodismo es sugerir, no evidenciar, y nosotros lo hemos politizado todo en el sentido de que metemos el teque y la muela en todo - el teque es retórica, consigna-. Eso hizo más a favor de la condición de los cubanos y de los valores del cubano que si yo metiera un editorial hablando de que bla bla bla Yo dije nada más lo que pasó. El tipo me volvió a escribir para agradecerme, y al año apareció una carta del hombre desde la prisión. RD10, usted no sabe lo que hizo por mí. Actualmente, yo mantengo relaciones de amistad por correspondencia con más de cien personas del país, y le voy a decir más, hay personas que vienen desde La Habana a visitarme y que cogen para llegar hasta Camagüey y que vienen y me traen la jaba (un pudín, un flan, no sé qué), y me han ayudado y me han aconsejado. Yo publiqué aquéllo, ¡y tuvo un impacto social!

Yo soy el que filtra los comentarios de mi sección. La dirección digital es la que filtra los comentarios en la web, pero yo le dije a dirección que yo quería filtrar los comentarios de mi sección. En esa época no existía la versión digital. Pero ahora yo le dedico tiempo a leer lo que la gente comenta. Y hay gente que me agrede, pero yo no les agredo. Yo les pregunto, ¿por qué usted me habla así? Yo lo único que hago es trabajar por el bien público. ¿Por qué usted me quiere herir? Está perdiendo el tiempo. Entonces, salen por allá todos los defensores míos a defenderme. Eso, en comunicación, es ejercer el liderazgo. Pero no un liderazgo desde arriba, sino al lado de la gente. Yo digo que yo no estoy en las alturas, yo no estoy en la acera, yo estoy en las alcantarillas, con la gente. Bueno, para terminarte el cuento, ese hombre, cada cuanto tiempo me escribe. Ha salido de prisión, se casó, tiene un hijo, trabaja. Y siempre me dice, ¿cuándo va a venir a conocerme? Y eso yo lo voy a dejar para un día hacer un gran reportaje. Ese es un reportaje soñado, con el tipo con el que interactué durante mucho tiempo. Y voy entonces a llegar a su casa, a verle la cara de frente, a conversar y a escribir un trabajo periodístico. Esa es una satisfacción muy grande que te cura de muchas heridas por las que pasas diariamente. Porque aquí, a la gente, yo he tenido conflictos con muchas personas, funcionarios públicos. Claro, el periódico no me ha abandonado. Cuando se creó esta sección, el director que estaba me dijo: Cuando te llamen, sea el ministro que sea y quiera discutir contigo, que venga aquí al periódico a hablar a nosotros, y eso se ha mantenido. El mérito no es mío nada más. Si yo no hubiera tenido el apoyo de la dirección, me hubieran tragado, me hubieran (golpea la mesa, como si lo aplastaran). Entonces, cada vez que hay alguien que no está conforme, tiene que venir aquí a pedir una reunión en la cuál estoy yo, está el director (bueno, han pasado ya tres directores, hay una directora ahora) y entonces vienen bufando y pidiendo sangre. Pero nosotros nos hemos acostumbrado ya a las reglas del juego. Hay toda una dramaturgia de la reunión que se creó. Que nos alegramos de que hayan venido, que cuál es el problema. -No, es que esto está dañando la imagen de la institución con las cosas que publica, y no sé qué. Yo tengo toda una filosofía. Le digo, ¿pero a usted le preocupa? Entonces, me dan la palabra a mí, y a mí no se me puede dejar hablar. Porque yo he conseguido una cosa, que viene de la madurez, que es poder discutir con elegancia y respeto, eso es muy difícil. (Anécdota sobre entrevista en España, en el programa de Mercedes Milá, cuando hubo la crisis de los balseros, allá por el año 94).

Sara: ¿Qué cambios ha visto desde el último congreso del Partido en 2011, y especialmente desde el congreso de la UPEC en 2013?

RD10: Hay cambios. Yo creo que hay un interés en modificar el modelo de prensa socialista cubano. Hay un interés, pero hay que resolver problemas, hay que tomar medidas, hay un interés pero que todavía no está manifiesto en acciones. La situación económica de los periodistas cubanos, yo trabajo en cuatro lugares. El basamiento material de la prensa cubana está en crisis total. Hay que ponerle dinero a eso. Si tú quieres levantar eso, hay que ponerle dinero. Yo creo que hay una conciencia de que el viejo modelo de prensa ya no va a más, pero hacen falta hechos, obras son amores.

Sara: ¿Qué está frenando esos cambios?

RD10: Yo creo que hay una parte que no depende del país, hay una parte que depende de nosotros. Yo creo que hay muchos colegas que ya se acostumbraron a hacer un periodismo apologético, un periodismo complaciente. Pero también es cierto que hay gente que quiere hacer un periodismo más investigativo, más profundo. Pero también, los editores y los directores...

hay directores y directores, editoriales y editores. Hay mucha gente. El cambio de mentalidad en Cuba, el fenómeno ese, tienes que haber oído hablar de esa palabra, se ha convertido en el nepio del problema, porque está gravitando sobre muchas esferas, y sobre el periodismo también. Ahora hay una política de comunicación institucional que va a validar el deber de las fuentes a dar la información, eso va a cambiar. Yo quiero, quiero ser optimista. Porque yo estoy convencido de que tenemos que cambiar, de que tenemos que transitar hacia otro modelo de periodismo para que precisamente no nos escamoteen los espacios, para incluso defender a la Cuba socialista con sus virtudes y sus defectos, con sus problemas. Pero defenderla no es nada más defenderla a ultranza. Defenderla es atacar lo que anda mal. Lo que no está favoreciendo el cambio. Aquí hay una lucha entre lo viejo y lo nuevo, aquí hay una lucha. Y fíjate, Fidel Castro, es increíble, pero hay un discurso, el de hay que cambiar todo lo que tenga que ser cambiado (su definición de Revolución). Porque nosotros no podemos estar ahí mordiéndonos las uñas.

Sara: Lo dijo el ministro de exteriores el otro día, cuando fue a Washington. Cambiar todo lo que tenga que ser cambiado.

RD10: Yo tengo la esperanza, yo soy un hombre que me he levantado mucho, de fracasos, pero siempre me levanto y no me canso. No se puede cansar uno. Y tengo la esperanza de que eso, la propia vida nos va a llevar. Nosotros no podemos dejar que este país se nos vaya de las manos, y que este país se nos inunde de las peores causas. Nosotros tenemos que estar ahí, tenemos que estar en el mar proceloso de Internet, tenemos que estar en los espacios digitales, tenemos que demostrar que Cuba bien vale la pena con todos sus defectos. Pero tenemos también que ayudar a Cuba, y ayudar a Cuba no es aplaudir y aplaudir, ¡ah! y todo está muy bien. Todos los días tenemos que mirar a Cuba y ver por dónde se nos va algo, por dónde se escapa la riqueza, los recursos, la fe, la esperanza. Tenemos que resolver esas grietas para que este pueblo tenga fe y tenga esperanza de que va a vivir mejor. No es el problema económico nada más. Ahora podemos mejorar, ahora los norteamericanos nos sueltan ciertas restricciones, empieza a llegar dinero, y si llegamos allí con el dinero, mejoramos, aparecen mejores casas, y estamos por dentro vacíos, ese es un desafío. Y perdimos las cosas hermosas que este proceso nos dio. La dignidad de que yo estoy orgulloso de ser cubano y el respeto al ser humano, y la fraternidad, y la solidaridad, eso que hacen los médicos cubanos, eso no podemos perderlo entre nosotros. Eso de que en Cuba se cae una persona por la calle y todo el mundo va a ayudarlo. Claro que la gente es así, pero también se mete en todo. El cubano es muy chismoso.

Yo creo que nosotros tenemos un desafío y tenemos que enfrentarlo con mucha inteligencia, porque la aldea global está dentro de Cuba. Cuba vivió bajo una campana de cristal, pero ya la campana se fue, y esta es la prueba más grande que va a tener la Revolución cubana. Demostrar su pertinaz sobrevivencia. Mira que hemos sobrevivido a cosas, pero este sí es el 'Período Especial', aquí el

‘Período Especial’ de que te diga que mi hija se acostó sin comer no se compara con esto, porque tenemos ya a *Disneylandia* metido ya, tenemos el enemigo dentro metido. Y no es que yo sea un parapetado en una escotilla con un fusil esperado al enemigo, pero el enemigo está dentro en el sentido de que el país se ha abierto, y hay que conservar lo mejor de esta sociedad. Hay que preservarlo y hay que desarrollarlo, y hay que atemperarlo a los tiempos. Internet ya mira, ya se está soltando. Nosotros no podemos vivir en una campana de cristal. Nosotros lo que tenemos que enseñarles a nuestros jóvenes es a que tengan un pensamiento para verlo todo y saber diferenciar lo banal de lo esencial, lo importante, y saber pensar por sí mismos, y no dejarse manipular por las maquinarias mediáticas que adocen a la gente y que le hacen ver que es más importante Brad Pitt que los niños.

En todas partes te encuentras personas que piensan, pero yo creo que el cubano lo que ha tenido es mucha dignidad, y no la puede perder. Y esta coyuntura es muy sutil, no vaya a ser que vengan ellos, y que vengan, mira, tip tip tip tip tip. El cambio vino antes de que los dos presidentes se dieron las manos. El cambio en Cuba se dio antes del 17 de diciembre, ya aquí se estaba descentralizando el país, se estaba creando la propiedad privada, se estaba creando, por ejemplo, la empresa estatal socialista. La estructura de la economía socialista cubana está modificándose radicalmente. Antes las empresas tenían que entregar todas las utilidades al presupuesto nacional del Estado para que se repartieran a todo el mundo. Ahora, un 50 por ciento de las utilidades quedan allí y la empresa decide con eso pagarles más a los obreros que trabajan mejor. Antes los obreros tenían un calificador según el que cobraban por lo que les tocaba. O sea, estamos hacia otro socialismo, y eso tiene consecuencias en la economía y en la sociedad también. Nosotros tenemos que resolver el problema del desarrollo local, del gobierno local, los gobiernos locales no pueden estar esperando el presupuesto del arriba. El emprendimiento. Cuba está transitando hacia el espíritu emprendedor, que no tiene que por qué ser el capitalismo. Es un socialismo, pero que deje espacio a la gente para emprender, y los gobiernos locales ahora empiezan a recibir las contribuciones de las empresas que están en ese lugar, y van a manejar dinero, y van a decidir si lo más importante en este pueblo es arreglar las calles, o arreglar el edificio más antiguo. Antes, eso venía desde arriba, y desde arriba no se puede ver con microscopio. En Artemisa y Mayabeque se están haciendo ensayos, todo se está haciendo por experimentos. Hay gente que dice que todo es muy lento, pero yo creo también que para hacer las cosas bien, las cosas hay que probarlas primero. Este país está transformándose de una manera increíble, lo que pasa es que todavía hay cosas que nos laceran. El problema de la unidad monetaria, eso fue en un momento una realidad, pero hay que crear condiciones. Primero, tú vas a empezar a mover el peso flotando sobre el dólar. Para eso tienes que tener más fuerza económica, más ingresos, un mercado más abastecido, en fin.

RA11

Journalist at *OnCuba* and *El Toque*

Havana, 25 September 2014

RA11: Cuando me puse a ver qué era lo que había audiovisualmente hecho sobre la blogosfera cubana, me di cuenta que había un reportaje de cinco minutos que había hecho un amigo mío. El tema de Internet se había tocado en dos documentales ya: *Redes.cu* y *Offline*. Pero propiamente los blogs como eje narrativo, no había nada y creí que era oportuno hacer un documental sobre la blogosfera cubana. Quizás no tanto sobre la blogosfera cubana, sino sobre una parte de la blogosfera cubana. No he dicho que *Blog Bang* sea la historia de toda la blogosfera cubana, ni que sea todo lo abarcador que debería ser la blogosfera cubana. Responde a un interés mío de mostrar qué está pasando con algunos blogs en Cuba. Aquí se han hecho varios materiales audiovisuales llamados ‘Las razones de Cuba’ que han dado una visión un poco distorsionada de lo que es un blog. La gente cree que un blog es solamente para subvertir un sistema, que es sinónimo de... (no quiero decir disidencia, porque disidencia no es la palabra). De contrar Revolución, es algo negativo.

Sara: Como un canal alternativo, no. Un canal alternativo con un discurso fuera de los cauces habituales.

RA11: Exacto, y eso es buenísimo. Nosotros, como sistema, como país, hemos vivido siempre al margen. Hemos siempre vivido en la alternatividad. Lo que pasa es que en nuestro contexto siempre ha existido una hegemonía, y es algo que uno empieza a replantearse. Si nosotros como sistema, como país, como nación, hemos vivido al margen, hemos sido marginados, hemos sido muy alternativos, ¿cómo a mí no me van a permitir ser alternativo? Si eso es lo que hemos sido y, dentro del camino, ha sido lo más certero que hemos podido escoger y nos ha ido (bien o mal, pero nos ha ido).

El documental va a ver un poco cuáles han sido esas experiencias. Yo enfoco mi tesis de los blogs como forma de participación ciudadana. Entonces, a partir de ahí, trato de demostrar cómo los blogs se han convertido en una forma de participación ciudadana, regulando los medios, cronicando la sociedad en la que viven los blogueros, modificando incluso resoluciones de Cuba a nivel Internacional. Eso ha tenido un impacto y es muestra de cómo los blogs pueden convertirse en una forma para que los ciudadanos gestionen su país, su nivel de vida, su sociedad... O, al menos, mostrar y regular qué está sucediendo con lo que ellos están viviendo y con lo que ellos están sintiendo.

Es democrático porque ahí yo pongo lo que yo creo. ¿Qué tiene sus consecuencias? Mira el ejemplo de *La Joven Cuba*, cuando fueron censurados. Como dice RD18 en el documental, fue una torpeza. Pero son aprendizajes también, son aprendizajes para el mismo poder, que tiene que aprender a lidiar y saber lidiar con esas voces alternativas. Sobre todo, en un proceso que se ilustra como democrático, o que grita a todas voces que es democrático. Si entonces estamos viviendo en un sistema que supuestamente es democrático, ¿cuán democrático es un blog? Por eso tienes que aprovechar esa fuerza para fortalecer tus decisiones morales.

Sara: ¿Cómo surgió el nombre?

RA11: El nombre surgió leyendo un poco de literatura que me hacía falta para el proceso de la tesis. Mucha gente llamaba a este surgimiento masivo de blogs ‘*blog bang*’. Y yo dije, bueno, esto se presta muchísimo para lo que yo quiero expresar: Cuba, porque es sobre Cuba. Y la pregunta es ¿Cuba ya vivió su *blog bang*? ¿O le falta todavía para vivir su *blog bang*? Porque los que tenemos conexión a Internet somos un 25% de la población cubana, y quizás eso es demasiado. Entonces, la pregunta es esa. Es algo que está implícito en el documental. Cuando todos tengamos acceso a Internet (toda la sociedad), van a surgir muchos blogs y los que hoy tenemos el privilegio de acceder a Internet y tenemos nuestros blog, quizás seamos los menos leídos. Porque hay muchos cubanos que tienen muchas ideas originales, y cuando se den cuenta que esas ideas pueden encontrar un medio para canalizarlas, entonces la competencia va a ser más difícil. Los blogueros hoy son privilegiados, corriendo todos los riesgos que corren los más auténticos. Pero el futuro hay que ver cómo viene. Y también, yo siempre he tratado de hacer el documental con una perspectiva de diálogo, para que las autoridades vieran de verdad qué es lo que está pasando.

Sara: Eso me gustó, el hecho de que fuera un poco buscando el consenso, como dice RC4.

RA11: Y esa es la idea. Sobre todo, es también para que ellos [¿el Partido? ¿Los líderes?] no digan que no les dije. Esto es lo que está pasando, esto es lo que pudiera pasar, incluso. Este es un material didáctico para ti, para que te alfabetices sobre lo que está sucediendo realmente. Los blogs no son Yoani Sánchez ni los otros. Ellos son una parte de la blogosfera, quieras tú o no, y tienes que aprender a lidiar con ellos. Lo han aprendido a hacer muy bien, pero el precio ha sido que también han marginado a otros, a los que no tienen acceso a Internet. Pensando que, cuando todos tengan acceso a Internet, esto pueda ser una catástrofe, y que aquí va a haber la Revolución Verde iraní... Y no va a ser así, porque Estados Unidos no ha instaurado el sistema socialista gracias a Internet. ¿A qué le temes si tú has preparado durante cincuenta años a tu pueblo para que sea instruido, culto? ¿Ahora le vas a negar una herramienta que contribuye mucho más a eso? Cuando yo iba a hacer el documental, había mucha gente que me preguntaba, ¿y vas a entrevistar a Yoani Sánchez? Y yo les decía, compadre tú acabas de mencionar a Yoani Sánchez. No me interesaba. Yo quería entrevistar a blogueros que nadie conociera, que son muy conocidos en el espacio virtual, pero que para las personas que no tienen acceso a Internet son completamente desconocidos.

Sara: Buscabas cambiar los estereotipos, ¿no?

RA11: Estos materiales de ‘Las razones de Cuba’, cada vez que hablaban del bloguero, hablaban de Yoani Sánchez, lo hacían con una perspectiva de desacreditarla.

[Sara comenta sobre un artículo académico que leyó sobre el blog de Yoani Sánchez].

RA11: Eso es lo que pasa también, y que es un defecto de la desconexión cubana hoy. Cuando tú no tienes a tu sociedad, a tu población en Internet, quienes se hacen dueños del debate son personas que están fuera de tu país. Y entonces, ahí lo que se muestra es la confrontación constante de Cuba-Estados Unidos, la dictadura-el socialismo, y no contribuye. Tú entras hoy en *La Joven Cuba*, y te pones a leer los comentarios, y ya al quinto o sexto comentario están hablando ya de cualquier cosa menos del tema de post, porque hay gente que se dedica a eso, desde aquí y desde allá, desde la otra parte. Entonces tú dices, ¡ya! Mi blog no es muy comentado, ni tampoco es tan visitado como *La Joven Cuba*, *La Chiringa de Cuba* o *Paquito el de Cuba*. En el mío, las personas que comentan son más del tema. No he tenido el privilegio de ganarme uno de esos troles, que son los que se encargan de subvertir y de cambiar el debate.

Sara: ¿Cuándo empezaste tu blog, y por qué?

RA11: Hace dos años que tengo el blog, y decidí abrir un blog porque también quería mostrar mi punto de vista de la sociedad cubana. A mí no me mandaron a hacer un blog, como fue el caso de

muchos periodistas cubanos, sobre todo al inicio de la blogosfera para tratar de dar una Cuba hermosa, linda, en contraposición a una Cuba destruida, dictatorial que daban los blogueros de la otra parte. Yo pongo en una de las expresiones del blog que es un blog para cronicar la realidad cubana, para que me sirva a mí y a las personas que entran al blog para entender la Cuba que estamos viviendo. Y cuando pasen quince o veinte años, para conocer la Cuba que vivimos. Eso nos ayudará mucho a entender la Cuba que estamos viviendo en este momento. Yo creo que esa es también una de las precariedades y uno de los defectos que tiene hoy la prensa cubana. Eso de lo que habla Leonardo Padura, un escritor cubano, que dice: Cuando vayamos a entender la Cuba que estamos viendo, no podremos recurrir a los medios oficiales cubanos, *Granma* o *Juventud Rebelde*, porque nos encontraremos con una Cuba de propaganda. Los blogs, hoy, para alguien que quiera estudiar la Cuba de cambios, o de no cambios, o de intentos de cambios, en los blogs se va a entender mucho mejor. Eso es lo que trato con mi blog. Y bueno, expresar mi punto de vista, un ciudadano de este país que tiene una opinión al respecto y quiere compartirla.

Sara: Siempre he pensado que en el documental se refleja la complejidad entre estar ‘dentro’ o ‘fuera’ de la Revolución. Una realidad un poco más complicada de lo que pudiera parecer, porque no basta con declararse revolucionario. ¿Cómo se lidia con esta ambigüedad?

RA11: Uno aprende a lidiar con eso defendiendo causas justas como la liberación de los Cinco Héroes de Estados Unidos. Cuando te pronuncias a favor de una causa como esta, (lamentablemente, a veces uno tiene que utilizarlo como escudo para demostrar ciertas cosas). Yo estoy de acuerdo con que ‘los cinco’ tienen que ser liberados, y en que quiten el bloqueo, y otras cosas muy certeras y que no tienen discusión alguna (o sea, tiene discusión para las personas que sí ya quieren otro sistema de vida).

Sara: Las personas que quieren un sistema se posicionan claramente fuera, pero ¿qué pasa con los blogueros que están ‘dentro’?

RA11: Uno aprende a marcar el ‘dentro’ con este tipo de cosas. Nosotros no lo decimos explícitamente, así, yo estoy en contra del bloque. Nosotros no queremos hacerle daño al proceso. Lo que pasa es que cuando criticas al proceso, muchas personas que están dentro se alarman, y tergiversan. No entienden que eso es una crítica, que es tu opinión, la de un ciudadano, la de un bloguero, y hay que aprender a lidiar con eso. Tú no vives en un país rosa, no hay países rosas. Todos los países tienen sus virtudes y sus defectos. Si tú sólo quieres hablar de los defectos, ese es tu punto de vista. Si tú quieres hablar sólo de las virtudes, ese es tu punto de vista. Pero no me impongas tú a mí tu punto de vista. Yo tengo mi punto de vista y no te lo estoy imponiendo.

Sara: Siempre se ha hablado sobre crear una opinión unificada sobre Cuba, sobre dar más privilegio a lo colectivo que a lo individual.

RA11: Pero yo creo que incluso, en estos tiempos, los medios hegemónicos van a seguir siendo los medios hegemónicos. *El País* sacó la foto de Chávez entubado, y *El País* no ha perdido su hegemonía, pero *TeleSur* sigue citando *El País* como referencia, e imagino que en España se sigue leyendo *El País*.

Hay otros mecanismos alternativos y tú tienes que aprender a lidiar con eso. El poder siempre va a ser el poder. Quien quiera defender el poder, pues bien por él. Pero que no quiera imponerme a mí un punto de vista. Aprende a respetarlo, como yo intento respetar el tuyo (que a veces no lo puedo respetarlo porque me parece muy invasivo, muy hegemónico).

Sara: Vamos a hablar de la prensa. Dime algunas virtudes y algunos desaciertos de la prensa cubana.

RA11: Voy a empezar por los desaciertos. Yo creo que los medios en Cuba son extremadamente controlados por el Partido. Eso no es un secreto para nadie, eso lo sabe todo el mundo. Yo creo que ese es un gran defecto y es algo contra lo que los periodistas en sus congresos se han pronunciado fuertemente. Eso le está haciendo mucho daño al mismo Partido. Cuando tú tienes el control sobre algo, y la gente comete errores, aunque tú no estés decidiendo ahí, esos errores caen sobre ti. Y cuando tú tienes el miedo de arriesgarte, no te arriesgas porque tienes miedo que esos errores caigan sobre ti. Ese centralismo, ese monopolio de los medios de comunicación, lo que ha provocado es que la gente pierda un poco de credibilidad en los medios. La gente sigue leyendo *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde* porque son las voces oficiales del Partido y la gente casi siempre cree en todo lo que sale en esos medios. O al menos, si no lo creen, dicen, esa es la voz del Partido, esa es la voz de la Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas. Lo que está ahí casi siempre, casi siempre, es verdad, aunque estemos hablando de propaganda. Cuando salen los lineamientos, o una información, es verdad. La gente siempre va a recurrir a este tipo de medios controlados por el Partido.

Yo, realmente, no sé cuál sería la solución a eso, porque yo no quiero tampoco unos medios que sean comerciales. Al final, alguien siempre va a dictar la línea editorial, y la línea editorial del Partido es mala, pero tiene sus virtudes. Trata de ser lo más educativa posible, con los referentes que ellos tengan, y que también deja fuera otros referentes culturales. Y mostrar un país que realmente no existe... Un país que de escuela gratis, de salud gratis, que todo eso es verdad, pero que luego de cincuenta años ya ese no puede seguir siendo el caldo de cultivo de nosotros. El caldo de cultivo de nosotros tiene que seguir siendo una mejor educación, una mejor salud. Ahora está saliendo un programa que se llama *Cuba Dice* (los martes y los viernes a las 8). Cuando uno ve *Cuba Dice*, uno piensa, bien. Lo que están diciendo es cierto, pero tiene un tono demasiado complaciente. A veces el periodismo tiene que ser agresivo, sin perder la perspectiva de diálogo. Es lo que a veces le pasa a estos medios, que son muy, muy, muy complacientes porque el poder es complaciente con el mundo.

[Sara comenta sobre el corto *Brainstorm*].

RA11: Es la filosofía de plaza sitiada la que también nos ha llevado a este atrincheramiento, que es justificado. Lo que pasa es que uno también trata de desarraigarse de esas justificaciones, de ese contexto, y decir: vamos a olvidarnos por un momento que tenemos al imperialismo, y que tenemos al bloqueo. Vamos a tratar de olvidarnos un poco de eso para ver si damos un paso, dos pasos. Y hemos tenido que aprender a desarraigarnos de esa filosofía de plaza sitiada que es constante, que cuando sucede lo de *Zunzuneo*, lo de USAID, uno se da cuenta uno que es real, que hay gente que está tratando de desestabilizar al sistema y que hay gente que está enriqueciéndose con todo esto, porque veinte millones dedicados... La plaza sitiada está, estamos sitiados, pero tenemos que desarraigarnos.

Sara: Si uno lo interpreta como la influencia de Estados Unidos en el resto del mundo, ¿no estamos todos sitiados? (Aunque Cuba lo esté más especialmente).

RA11: Eso es cierto, lo que pasa es que nosotros les hicimos una Revolución a ellos. Es una cuestión de que ‘yo te la apliqué, yo fui mucho más inteligente que tú y no dejé que tú estaras aquí, y ahora tengo que tratar de defender eso, que lo que logré con tanto sacrificio no se vaya a bolina.

Y virtudes de la prensa. Te hablaba un poco de que es una prensa educativa, aunque es también puede ser cuestionado porque, ¿educativo en qué sentido? ¿Virtudes? No sé, yo creo que con 24 años todavía no me toca ver las virtudes de la prensa.

El otro punto es que la prensa cubana no es solamente *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde*. Hoy, en prensa cubana, hay que contar con *OnCuba*, con *Cuba Contemporánea*, con *Progreso Semanal*, con *Kafé Fuerte*, con *Catorce y Medio*. Es decir, con todos esos medios que son parte de la sociedad civil

cubana hoy. ¿Que hay algunos que tienen un financiamiento que vienen de los mismos fondos de la USAID? Es verdad, pero creo que esa gente tiene la enfermedad de la dictadura, que mientras esa gente siga hablando de dictadura en Cuba, no van a lograr nada.

Sara: ¿Te parece que hay cierto oportunismo en ese sentido?

RA11: Yo sí lo creo. Es una ideología mundial, es una ideología que viene del *mainstream* de los medios internacionales. Es decir, *El País* habla de dictadura... ¿Cuál es tu objetivo? ¿Tu objetivo es mostrar que un país está en decadencia y en dictadura? Ok, solo que así no vas a dialogar con pueblo. Si tú lo que quieres es dialogar con el pueblo y decirle, mira, tienes tantos vagabundos en la calle, tienes tantas casas que se están cayendo. Sobre todo, porque al poder le ofende mucho que le digan dictadura, y sobre todo la gente tampoco percibe que esto sea una dictadura, sobre todo por la connotación internacional que tiene la palabra dictadura, de muertos... Y no creo que esa prensa vaya a dialogar mucho, ni vaya a construir mucho con lo que estaba haciendo. Ahora está surgiendo esta otra prensa, *On Cuba*, *Cuba Contemporánea*, *Progreso Semanal*, ellos sí han oxigenado un poco la prensa. ¿El defecto que tienen? Que están en Internet y que muchos cubanos no tienen acceso a Internet.

[Anécdota: A mí me pasó una experiencia súper enriquecedora. Yo publico un video una vez, hace como tres o cuatro meses, y se lo enseño a un amigo. El amigo coge el video y se lo lleva a otro amigo que distribuye el paquete de la semana, y así la gente se enteró así. Esa es una noticia la publicó *CubaDebate*, que es el medio digital más oficial. Pero no lo publicó *Granma*, ni *Juventud Rebelde*, ni salió en el Noticiero, que sí estuvo en la cobertura cuando vinieron. Bueno, y el amigo le sacó una pila de dinero. La gente se enteró por el paquete.]

Sara: Nunca he visto ‘el paquete’. ¿Cómo funciona?

RA11: El paquete semanal es el Internet de los pobres. Anda en un disco duro de 1000 GB,

donde tienes mucha información como en Internet, tienes de todo: vienen series, dramas, novelas coreanas, novelas brasileñas, *reality shows*, filmes cubanos (una minoría), vienen filmes latinos, actualizaciones de anti-virus, vienen revistas españolas, latinas, ESPN... Tienes de todo, tienes para escoger. Si tú eres una persona con nivel cultural... a la que le gustan las novelas (no voy a decir un nivel cultural bajo, porque sería injusto), ahí las vas a encontrar. Si tu interés es el deporte, vas a tener tus revistas y tus materiales.

¿Qué está sucediendo con el paquete? Que se está convirtiendo en la televisión privada de la gente. Es un medio informativo también. Ahí, los que están distribuyendo el paquete hace como cuatro o cinco meses, están incluyendo a *CubaDebate* y *Cubahora* para que se pueda acceder. Ellos lo hacen como una forma para afirmar que están ‘dentro’. La gente se cuida mucho de decir que distribuyen el paquete.

Sara: Claro, la gente que configura y que distribuye el paquete tiene mucho poder.

RA11: Es por eso que asusta tanto al poder, porque si el paquete comienza a incluir una perspectiva ideológica, o una forma de pensar que va contra el poder, entonces se acaba el paquete. Es por eso que los que hacen el paquete prefieren quedarse en lo más ligero. Ellos están en una regulación que todo el mundo sabe que existe, pero que no existe. Te lo decía porque también ahí se está insertando publicidad. Los negocios particulares insertan publicidad en el paquete.

Sara: Justamente estaba leyendo la tesis de RC4. Ella hablaba del impacto que está teniendo el mercado en la comunicación en Cuba. Porque creo que sólo hay una emisora de radio en Cuba con publicidad.

RA11: Nosotros, que hemos tratado tanto de apartarnos de un modelo social, económico, que es el capitalismo... y ahora con toda esta perspectiva de cambio que está permitiendo la iniciativa privada, las mismas personas son las que están lo imitando, las que están usando esas herramientas que tanto negamos, las están haciendo suyas. Eso no es ni bueno ni malo, lo que hay es que aprender a utilizarlas y tratar de ser lo más auténticos posible. Tener claro qué es lo que tenemos y qué es lo que queremos.

Ahora mismo está saliendo una revista de farándula que se llama VISTAR, que es de la *high light* en Cuba, desde el punto de vista artístico. Y es una revista hecha por gente que cree que eso es lo que le falta al panorama artístico cubano, sin llegar a ser una prensa amarillista. [Comentan]. Eso es lo que le sigue pasando a este tipo de medios que han surgido, que son online, que es lo bueno de Internet. Pero para una sociedad desconectada es difícil. Desconectada entre comillas, porque cuando un artículo tiene mucha repercusión la gente se lo pasa por correo, porque yo he llegado a mi casa y mi mamá me ha dicho ¿así que tú escribiste esto, ¿no? Mi mamá no tiene acceso a Internet, la gente se lo pasa por su correo en el trabajo. Recuerdo cuando estaba en el primer año, una vez que intentamos entrar en la Lenin un día del egresado, y se lo envié a un amigo en la UCI, y al mes mi mamá lo tenía impreso, a pesar de que ni siquiera lo había publicado. Hay redes que funcionan, y por eso cuando uno habla de desconexión, tiene que pensar y replantearse, es decir, ¿qué tipo de desconexión? Es lo que dice RC4, esta es una sociedad que está muy capitalizada: están las redes wifi, los correos electrónicos, etc.

Sara: Antes de Internet también había formas de que entrara información: el turista, el familiar de afuera, materiales que entraban...

RA11: Internet lo que ha hecho es vulgarizar, exagerar eso que ha existido. Porque bueno, el paquete semanal es una forma de los bancos de películas que existían. Hasta el periódico *Granma* ha hablado del paquete semanal. Un crítico de cine habló de eso. El crítico de cine hizo una crítica bastante constructiva. Mucha gente niega el paquete porque aseguran que está imponiendo gustos, lo que sucede es que dentro del paquete vienen muchas cosas, mayormente series, películas, dramas, etc.

Sara: Me interesa mucho la idea de la responsabilidad social de los medios. ¿De qué manera un periodista, o un bloguero, puede cumplir con esa responsabilidad social?

RA11: Tengo una responsabilidad cuando trato de demostrarle a las personas que el alcoholismo, que el tabaquismo, no son una alternativa, que hay modos de vida que no son los más adecuados. Ahí tengo una responsabilidad. Lo que sucede es que la responsabilidad social se pierde cuando trato de dibujar una realidad que realmente no existe, cuando dejo que me publiquen el artículo sin la línea que realmente necesitaba, cuando no se hacen reportajes de investigación, que creo que es uno de los defectos que tiene la prensa hoy. No estamos trabajando con referentes de hace veinte o treinta años. Eso es demasiado tiempo para una sociedad que ha cambiado muy rápido.

Sara: ¿Y los blogueros?

RA11: Creo que los blogueros la cumplen hasta cierto punto. No creo que los blogueros sean la solución a los medios de prensa. Un periodista es un asalariado de la información y tiene tiempo para hurgar en lo que nadie busca, y los medios pagan por eso, por buscar donde nadie busca, porque reveles lo que nadie muestra. Los blogueros son más de opinión, de la inmediatez, que eso también tiene su función. A menos que te encuentres a un bloguero que sea un fuera de serie y que se dedique a contrastar información, a hacerlo de verdad.

Es muy difícil, porque para poder contrastar información necesitas entrevistar a gente que tiene esa información, y si tú no vienes de *Granma* o de *Juventud Rebelde* para hacer una entrevista, no te dan la información. Eso es lo otro, aquí no hay una ley que diga qué información es pública o privada. Hay que acabar de definir qué es información pública y qué es privada. Eso es una forma de regular. Los medios tienen una función reguladora pública. Si publico que tenías que tener quinientas toneladas y no publico que tuviste trescientas, ese es un grave error... Tienes que aprender a llevar la de ganar y la perder. La información tiene ese rol, y el periodista es el gestor de esa información.

Sara: Algo que me impactó mucho en junio fue ver la libertad que tenían los estudiantes de Periodismo. Me quedé de piedra cuando vi que estudiantes de licenciatura se atrevían a criticar el modo en que se cubrían los lineamientos frente al director de *Granma*. Me impactó también que los directores de medios acepten esas críticas. ¿Cómo es posible esa apertura en la universidad?

RA11: Es así, lo que pasa es que, si se fueran a tener en cuenta todos los estudios, todas las tesis que se han hecho en la facultad, este fuera otro país, uno mucho mejor. Los directivos y nosotros hemos aprendido a escuchar un poco. Te invitan a escuchar, pero la capacidad de acción es la que está atada. El director del medio está escuchando las críticas y por dentro está pensando, “si tú supieras”. Eso lo que da muestras es de cuán monopolizado están los medios de comunicación.

Sara: Yo no me imagino a los estudiantes en España o en Inglaterra criticando los medios delante de los directores de medios. El hecho de que aquí se de esa situación, me parece positivo.

RA11: Creo que es el miedo a dale al director de *Granma* autonomía. Hay que darle autonomía a las personas, y que estas comentan sus propios errores. Es muy contradictorio al espíritu socialista. Socialismo es construcción de un proyecto entre todos, y aquí lo que se ha construido es lo de una persona y lo de un grupo. Tú eres el director de *Granma* y eres el responsable de lo que salga ahí. Si metes la pata, la metiste. El poder no tiene la capacidad de visión del periodista, que está en la calle todo el tiempo. Creo que se necesita autonomía, independencia, para llegar a ser una prensa lo más sana posible.

No quiero una prensa rosa, o una prensa amarilla. La vida personal de un artista no me interesa porque no creo que tenga importancia social. Leo *VISTAR* porque tiene cosas interesantes. Tenemos paradigmas y patrones, y tenemos que aprender a sacar de esos paradigmas y de esos patrones cosas buenas. El socialismo no se puede construir con las armas melladas del capitalismo, pero hay armas del capitalismo que no están melladas, y tenemos que usar esas que no están melladas.

Sara: Se habla mucho de cambios en la prensa. He visto reportajes, cartas de lectores en *Granma*. En la facultad se habla mucho del último congreso de la UPEC... ¿En qué etapa están los cambios?

RA11: Creo que hay cambios, pero no todos los que deberían existir. Cuando uno ve *Cuba Dice* y los criterios de los lectores, uno se da cuenta que aflojaron un poco, pero no todo lo que deberían. Hay situaciones que uno vive en las que te das cuenta de que no ha cambiado nada. Por ejemplo, hoy las redes sociales se están moviendo con la noticia de que sacaron un perfume que se llama Hugo Chávez y otro que se llama Ernesto Che Guevara, y la gente está muy disgustada con eso. Lo más triste es que lo sacó una empresa que tiene mucho prestigio aquí, *LABIOFAM*, y hoy, o en estos días veremos si un periodista escribe sobre eso, y si le quieren publicar el artículo en el periódico. Tengo amigos que han querido publicar en esos periódicos y no han podido, y lo han enviado para *OnCuba*, para *Cuba Contemporánea*.

Sara: He leído lo de la venta de autos, que creó un gran debate en la blogosfera, hasta el punto de que la prensa nacional se pronunció. ¿Sucedó mucho que la blogosfera presione para que un tema salga?

RA11: Sí, creo que sí. Sucedió igual con el cable de fibra óptica, que es una de las cosas de las que se habla en el documental. Creo que eso es democrático. Como poder puedo creer que esto no es motivo, pero la gente te está diciendo que sí, que es ahora, hasta que cedes. Es la ciudadanía, la gente expresándose sin ningún tipo de temor, compartiendo criterios, incluso encontrando formas de pensar que coinciden, y eso les da valentía. Eso ha sucedido y es bueno, y es muestra de que hay muchas personas, de que ese 25% que está conectado ha hecho cosas. Imagínate toda Cuba conectada a Internet.

Sara: Creo que sería lo mismo...

RA11: Creo que el impacto sería diferente. Seríamos un poquitico más los que participaríamos del debate.

Sara: Quien tiene una inquietud ya está buscando esas formas de comunicarse.

RA11: Sí sobre, todo porque es una forma de educar a los que tú crees que te están viendo y que tienen un poder de decisión. Ahora mismo lancé un proyecto desde el blog que se trata de grabar, desde el punto más alto de tu país, una declaración de amor. Y dije, ¿para qué voy a hacer esto, si nadie lo va a ver en mi país? Pero es para todo el mundo. Dije, voy a creerme que lo van a ver, y voy a intentar convocar al mundo desde mi blog, y ahí está, el proyecto está caminando.

Debate... no puedo decirte qué debate está creado. Muchas personas han hablado, han escrito sobre el documental en Internet. Ahora lo que estoy es buscando formas de visibilizar el documental. Lo han visto amigos de mi mamá, que son personas que no tienen acceso a Internet, y les ha cambiado un poco la perspectiva de lo que son los blogueros. Eso me regocija porque creo que valió de algo hacer el documental. Mucha gente dice que es un documental parcializado y coincido con ellos, porque no tiene a Yoani Sánchez, pero esa era mi intención. Yoani Sánchez no estaba entre mis objetivos. Yo quería personas que fueran alternativas a todo, alternativas a un sistema hegemónico desde dentro, y alternativas a un sistema hegemónico desde fuera, y Yoani Sánchez está muy alineada con los medios internacionales. No me interesaba hablar de ella. Muchas personas dicen que todos los blogueros son blancos, ¡qué coincidencia! Creo que fue algo que sucedió sin querer, que todos los blogueros sean blancos. No creo que sea un documental que peque de racista. Para mí eso, es súper rico. Me gustaría que más personas lo vieran, sobre todo más personas cubanas. Estuve viendo las visitas en *YouTube* y van por quinientas y pico, pero son pocas para un tema tan importan

RB12

Editor at *Juventud Rebelde*

Havana, 30 July 2014

Sara: ¿Cuáles son las principales virtudes y defectos que tú ves en el periodismo que se hace en Cuba hoy en día?

RB12: La UPEC se fundó en 1964, o en el '63, porque cumple medio siglo. Eso nos habla del proceso de institucionalización, que empezó en 1961, cuando hay un proceso de evolución muy fuerte de la propia fundación de la Revolución.

Vamos a empezar por las virtudes que son muchas. Creo que una de las virtudes que tiene la prensa cubana es la ética de su prensa. Cuando yo hablo de su ética me estoy refiriendo a todo ese sistema de valores, y principios, por los cuales se encauza la profesión y se defiende la profesión. Creo que ese es uno de los pilares fundamentales. Lo segundo es que también ajustado a ese sistema de valores, a esa ética. Yo creo que la prensa cubana tiene como vocación ser un servidor público. Por lo tanto, no responde a los intereses ni de una empresa, ni de un grupo financiero, ni de una transnacional, ni de la policía. Responde a un país, a un pueblo, aunque parezca una masa muy homogénea, no distinguida. Representa a su país, se debe a él. Y también, siguiendo por ese mismo hilo de los acontecimientos, el tercero es el hecho de que no está viciada ni atravesada por la publicidad. Cuando yo veo las leyes de medios que han pasado ahora recientemente en América Latina, en Argentina, los cambios también que se han dado en la ley de medios de Ecuador, lo que más se defiende es la propiedad de los medios, lo segundo son los porcentos de transmisión que tienen que tener, que yo digo, ¡Dios mío! No tenemos que lidiar, no estamos viciados por esos fenómenos. Tenemos batallas ganadas naturalmente. Por ejemplo, yo tengo treinta años solamente, y mi generación ha heredado un grupo de cosas naturalmente que forman parte de mi vida cotidiana, y es una herencia que cuando ves otras realidades te das cuenta de que tienes algo muy grande, y que a veces pasa desapercibido. No tenemos ni que estar definiendo los porcentos del espacio radioeléctrico. Bueno todo eso entra dentro de la propiedad de los medios.

Nosotros teníamos el mismo ritmo latinoamericano, no creas que era otra realidad, con todo, con el bipartidismo.... La Revolución es la negación de todas las cosas que nos hicieron daño en otro momento. O no tanto la negación; la superación de ese tipo de cosas.

Creo que lo otro es que eso nos permite, esa realidad nos permite, pensar la prensa con autonomía, con soberanía, frente a la planificación de tu agenda editorial. No está viciada por ningún tipo de compromiso, por ningún tipo de fuerza económica de este tipo que es muy negativo. Esa soberanía es parte de nuestras virtudes hoy en día, que no son menores, son grandes virtudes, porque yo creo que eso tiene un peso en todo. Eso, por un lado. Yo creo que la profesionalidad de sus periodistas, porque sus periodistas ¿quiénes son? No son ninguna casta privilegiada. No estamos hablando de un segmento que llega dinásticamente a la prensa, sino que estamos hablando de un grupo de personas que tenemos raíces diferentes, todos venimos de familias humildísimas. Cuando comienzas a desentrañar, somos personas que accedimos a la universidad por un sistema universal de enseñanza, es decir, con un derecho universal. Como te digo eso, también es una de las carreras más selectivas para acceder a la universidad. Para acceder a la universidad acá no es por dinero, pero hay un sistema de filtraje, y periodismo es una de las carreras más filtradas, pero filtradas en conocimiento. Casi todos los jovencitos que llegan a periodismo tienen unos índices académicos de

noventa y pico, y que estudiaron en preuniversitarios de ciencias exactas, porque como una la élite de los preuniversitarios por sus conocimientos, por su nivel cognitivo, no por nivel adquisitivo. Eso es muy importante, porque los que llegan a estos lugares son personas más preparadas, se supone que con una vocación también sedimentada. Porque también tenemos pruebas de actitud (o aptitud), no sólo la prueba de ingreso, sino una prueba de actitud (o aptitud) que te discrimina si no la pasas, y en alguna medida también es un filtro político, porque habla de tu vocación, pero también habla de tu comprometimiento con el sistema de valores que defiende la prensa. Y el sistema de valores que defiende la prensa es el mismo sistema de valores que defiende la Revolución como proceso. Y cuando te hablo de eso, para no quedarme a un nivel ambiguo, en lo discursivo, un grupo de valores como el de justicia social, como el de la igualdad de derechos, de oportunidades. Ese es un grupo de derechos que ha defendido este país como sistema sociopolítico y socioeconómico.

Te hablaba de la profesionalidad, de la preparación de sus fuerzas, te hablé de su sistema de valores, te hablé de la soberanía de los medios... Otro sistema de valores que también tiene la prensa cubana es que, en alguna medida, ha tratado de llegar a todos los niveles. Eso forma parte de la institucionalidad del país. Ahora hablamos de desarrollo local, pero creo que estamos hablando de una nueva etapa de institucionalización que empieza a partir de 2006 con la transición política, y estamos hablando de una etapa de perfeccionamiento del propio sistema que hemos creado. No se puede olvidar que el mayor desarrollo que hemos tenido en estos cincuenta y pico años es el hecho de que, este país tenía unas tres provincias nada más. Estructuralmente e infraestructuralmente solo existían tres provincias. Cuando recorres el país, el paisaje hoy es muy diverso.

Yo vengo de un pueblito humildísimo que se llama (¿?) en Villa Clara. Es un consejo popular, que se subordina a un municipio, y ese municipio se subordina a una provincia, que es la estructura. Ese pequeño municipio tiene una televisora, a lo mejor en un país desarrollado eso es natural, pero en Cuba, con un PIB tan desfavorecido, con las condiciones que teníamos realmente, es una virtud que llega a todos lados. Tiene su telecentro, que es una televisora municipal. Tiene su propia radio municipal. No tiene un periódico, porque sería muy pequeño. Pero cada provincia del país tiene su propio periódico. Nacionalmente, tenemos tres periódicos nacionales, y un grupo de revistas. Creo que, el sistema más que en cantidad, ha tratado de llegar a todos los lugares, que las personas vean reflejado su mundo a ese nivel más micro. Se ha pensado así también.

Yo, por ejemplo, visité Puerto Padre, un municipio de Las Tunas, una provincia Oriental de las nuevas que surgieron con la Revolución. Y ese municipio de Puerto Padre, el historiador nos contaba la cantidad de revistas que tenía. Y uno piensa, bueno, ha habido una involución, porque antes del '59 había como diez revistas. Pero cuando tú lo miras, lo tienes que mirar con todos los detalles (a lo mejor tenían una economía muy solvente). Pero cuando tú miras a otro pueblito, ahí no había nada. Entonces, lo que hizo la Revolución fue ese desarrollo local. Tratar de homogenizar ese desarrollo, que no se quedara concentrado sólo en determinadas capitales, en determinadas urbes, o en determinados municipios mucho más poderosos. Eso también una de las virtudes, tratar de estar en todo el espectro, y tratar de darles fuerzas a todos los imaginarios colectivos, con sus singularidades.

Sara: Me preguntaba si se esto forma parte del proyecto de elevar el nivel cultural de toda la población.

RB12: También, porque si te das cuenta, ¿dónde se hace la Revolución? En las montañas. Y cuando tú vas a las montañas cubanas, siguen siendo escenarios desfavorecidos por lo intrincado que también es una limitación. Son personas que hacen la Revolución atravesados emotivamente por esa circunstancia. Quien funda una Revolución, quien gana el poder político, teniendo esas vivencias, no pueden ser los mismos que piensan el país desde otros escenarios, porque las vivencias también te forman, te impactan y también son elementos que van condicionando todo tu desarrollo sociocultural.

Ya te he mencionado varias de esas virtudes. Ahora voy a los defectos... Podríamos ser más eufemísticos y llamarles 'grandes desafíos'. Pero no le tengo miedo tampoco a la palabra 'defectos', porque los defectos pueden ser un punto de partida para tú superarte y mejorarte. No tenemos por qué negar las palabras, aunque nos resulten incómodas. Es muy simpático, porque en el socialismo nosotros yo creo que tenemos una visión tan optimista de las cosas que a veces dibujamos las realidades, pero tiene que ver con esa mirada. Yo creo que, culturalmente, uno está atravesado por esa visión de optimismo, de mejoramiento, que por ahí también va esa mirada, rehuendo ciertas palabras que pueden hacerle a uno sentirse incómodo. Igual que las etiquetas, estigmatizan las palabras también. Y no es así, no hay que tenerles miedo.

Dentro de esos defectos, yo creo que está, primero, la situación infraestructural que está marcando toda la realidad de la prensa, y la está marcando dolorosamente, y no obedece a un deseo de la dirección del país, porque la prensa no está tampoco atomizada, porque la prensa se debe a un contexto económico, y ese contexto económico lo tiene el país muy endurecido en el país. Pero lo tienes muy endurecido porque... Yo digo que la Revolución, una de las cosas más grandes que nos dio fue la dignificación del ser humano. Creo que eso es algo muy valioso, porque tú como ser humano te dignificas, y piensas y analizas tu mirada desde una autoestima mucho más establecida, y eso es algo muy favorable. Pero eso no nos puede dejar olvidar que estamos en un país con recursos ínfimos. Esto no es un continente, no es un país con historia de colonizaciones que le pueda haber generado un plus. No. Somos una isleta, y a veces hay una creencia de que nos creemos el ombligo del mundo. ¡Era tan grande esa autoestima! Esa es una de las grandes herencias de la Revolución. Somos supercríticos. Nosotros, internamente, somos supercríticos con nuestras realidades. Pero a veces hay algunas críticas que, uno dice, ¡Caballero! O se arreglan los baches de la calle, o el transporte... Son muchos frentes abiertos, y por ahí pasa la prensa también, es uno de esos frentes abiertos que tiene. Y se le pone dinero muy poquito a poco. Como también se le pone poquito a poco a otros lugares.

Qué pasa, que también pasa por el modelo de prensa. Si usted tuviera también un modelo en el que, dentro de su objeto social... Por ejemplo, *Juventud Rebelde* lo ha hecho. *Juventud Rebelde* tiene un periódico que se llama *Opciones*, que está siendo comercial. Es un periódico que en su agenda editorial se distingue de *Juventud Rebelde* porque tiene un perfil marcadamente económico y financiero, y entonces ese periódico es con fines recaudatorios. No niega los principios éticos, ni de soberanía. Eso no se negocia. Pero sí tiene publicidad ese semanario, pero no circula públicamente, sino para sectores financieros, tiene como se cotiza una especie de bolsas de valores de productos del mercado interno... Pero está dedicado a las empresas mixtas y nos provee de fondos económicos.

¿Qué pasa? Que nosotros tenemos un diseño, una arquitectura económica, que no somos un periódico autónomo. Somos el periódico de la juventud cubana, y eso nos genera nexos en el orden económico a la UJC, que es una organización política pero que parte de su presupuesto viene de lo que le aporta *Juventud Rebelde*. Por lo tanto, mis finanzas no son solo para mí. Un por ciento es el que utilizamos. Si todo lo que ingresamos fuera para nosotros, le daría más autonomía al periódico para decir, este mes voy a comprar diez computadoras. Te daría autonomía económica, financiera. Y eso no, no está concebido así. Ahí hay un problema estructural que debemos cambiar.

Por ejemplo, en China (¡por favor, segunda economía del mundo!). Pero debemos comparar, porque nuestros sistemas políticos también son muy semejantes. Ahora un compañero nuestro estuvo 21 días allá y nos contaban que esos medios de comunicación eran megaempresas, porque además tenían hoteles. Acá no. Acá nosotros tenemos esto lugar. La poligrafía no es nuestra tampoco, es del Estado, del país. Nosotros somos clientes de ellos. Vas a otros lugares y esa arquitectura, ese diseño de la prensa, infraestructuralmente, no tiene esas dependencias. Lo mismo que yo te comentaba como virtud, en cuanto a estructuración, nos generas también dificultades

como esas, que infraestructuralmente estamos... (Enseña su teléfono, bromeando). Tenemos una indigencia tecnológica en ese sentido. O las computadoras no son las de mayores prestaciones, quisiéramos tener más servidores para hacer más proyectos, y no los tenemos. O de carros, por ejemplo, personalmente es muy feo, pero soy subdirectora y tengo un Lada del año no sé cuál. A ver, llevo un año de subdirectora, llevo un año en este puesto, y ha pasado más meses roto (ahora mismo yo vine a pie). Es parte de los valores que nada, vengo a pie. Porque es parte de esa pasión, de esa formación. No me puedo ni dar el gustazo de pensar que tengo carro; no te puedes viciar por eso, porque también es un carro estatal.

Los salarios también son salarios muy insuficientes. Esos salarios tan desfavorecidos impactan la calidad. Todos esos factores infraestructurales pueden afectar la calidad. Porque por más allá de la fe, de la vocación, va a llegar un momento en el que te va a hacer fisuras, y tienes que aprender a lidiar con esas dificultades. Que tengas celular y que tengas que llamar a alguien y que no haya manera, porque es bastante caro. Eso es algo de lo más fuerte con lo que convive la prensa: las carencias, las limitaciones infraestructurales, tecnológicas.

Ahora, entre las virtudes también (perdóname la regresión) estos son profesionales que, en medio de la situación tan áspera económicamente que tiene el país, se han tratado de beneficiar en algunos momentos. Recuerdo que Fidel, en algún congreso de la UPEC (no sé si fue el sexto, o el séptimo) le dio a un grupo de periodistas computadoras, se las regalaron. Cuando comencé en el 2006 tuvimos un beneficio así, se les dio computadoras a precios muy subsidiados (a mí me costó unos 20 dólares). También en la entrega de teléfonos fijos, se ha priorizado, se ha tratado de priorizar a los periodistas. Se entregaron un grupo de carros en un momento como estímulo al trabajo destacado de un grupo de profesionales del sector. Casi todos los periodistas tenemos cuentas de Internet en nuestras casas y casi no pagamos nada, pagamos 30 pesos cubanos, y se paga el consumo al mes. Es para que te des cuenta. Profesionalmente, yo pago un dólar al mes y tengo Internet en mi casa. Ahora, no es la súper Internet, pero la tienes. A veces pasamos trabajo con las redes sociales (las páginas que más pesan). Los recién graduados de los últimos cinco años son los únicos que no lo tienen [el acceso] en las casas. Aquí en el periódico somos una plantilla de unos ciento ochenta trabajadores (o ciento cuarenta y pico), y te puedo garantizar que casi el 70% de esos trabajadores tiene Internet, es decir, casi cien personas tenemos internet. Pero casi todos los periodistas. Me atrevería a decir que sólo los de los últimos cinco años no lo tienen en casa.

Sara: ¿Algo más en cuanto a desafíos?

RB12: Te hablaba de las infraestructuras, pero también te hablaré de las estructuras internas y externas. Hoy todas las definiciones de lo que se publica o no se publica pasan por la dirección del periódico, pasan por la visión que tú tengas de si se debe o no se debe publicar, no pasa por la visión de una autoridad externa como Partido. Yo no he vivido eso, te lo confieso. El Partido lo que hace es ayudarte y abrirte miles de caminos. Yo creo que también hay que cambiar los métodos estructurales a la hora de cubrir noticias. Yo creo que el mundo está apostando por la polivalencia del periodismo, y nosotros aquí todavía estamos en un método muy tradicional. Algunos han ampliado un poco más su diapason profesional, pero creo que el contexto tecnológico no te permite más. Casi todo está marcado por ese factor económico.

Pero, por ejemplo, el hecho de que un periodista haga una cobertura y también un video, y también esté pensando en cómo hacer una cobertura para la web, eso no existe. Es el periodista más tradicionalista que está pensando en el impreso, en su lead, en la pirámide invertida. El esquema de pensamiento es el tradicional. Yo creo que también nos hace falta una evolución hacia un pensamiento más polivalente, mucho más integrador de todo el sistema de medios. ¿Por qué *Juventud Rebelde* no pudiera tener su propia televisora? Darle más funcionalidades a la web. Ese es otro de los problemas, porque hay un diseño tradicional de la organización de la rutina productiva y creo que esa es una deficiencia, un desafío que hay por delante.

Si te hablo de eso también te tengo que hablar de lo estructural. Siento que también esta ha sido una prensa (me dicen los que llevan más tiempo) y voy al pensamiento de ellos, una prensa muy marcada por los intrusismos institucionales. Esos intrusismos que yo en *Juventud Rebelde* no he vivido, pero que en provincia dicen que se marca más, que la autoridad del partido, alguien de sus miembros va y decide qué debe ir en portada o qué no debe ir, eso ha marcado los quehaceres de la prensa cubana. Por eso a veces somos un poco timoratos a la hora de proponer, porque dicen que estamos marcado por el ‘si nos regañan’.

Esta es otra de las virtudes, porque tienes la posibilidad de no ser infalible. Tú haces una entrevista atrevida que puede tener implicaciones en determinados funcionarios, que les cueste el puesto de trabajo, y eso no te cuesta la vida, tú te puedes meter en un asunto incómodo y no te cuesta la vida, porque hay una autoridad política en el Partido que siempre está muy pendiente de nuestros periodistas. No hay casos de periodistas muertos, que es un contexto común en Centroamérica, y pudiéramos estar viciados por eso. Pero también hay otro sistema de valores instaurado.

Vuelvo atrás. El intrusismo profesional [factores externos]. Puedes consultar la tesis del Dr. Julio García Luis. O que tú vas a hacer una cobertura a un lugar... Ahí voy, a la organización de las coberturas. Mucha de la organización de las coberturas depende de que nos hayamos acostumbrado a eso. Yo odio eso, soy de una generación que no quiere que estemos marcados por eso. Atiendes determinados sectores, atiendes el azúcar, atiendes la agricultura, te llama alguien de la agricultura, su jefe de comunicación, te llama y hay una visión muy institucional, muy propagandística. Te llama la fuente y te dice, -Tenemos eso. Y para allá que va el periodista, que hace un trabajo propagandístico y vira para atrás. Porque adolecemos del hecho de que el propio periodista se haga su propia agenda, la piense. Y nosotros como dirección estamos tratando de quitar esas costumbres culturales, es un interés nuestro. Ahora atiendo varios grupos, entre ellos la parte digital y yo les digo: -Búsquenme todo lo que está en las redes sociales sobre Cuba y llévenlo a ese espacio que tenemos todos los días que es el consejo, que se planifica para empezar a enriquecer. Lo que tú sientes también es que, hasta los editores jerarquizan las cosas institucionales, y esto es parte de los defectos.

¿Qué pasa? Vuelvo a lo económico. Es una prensa fea, gris, con un paginado poco favorecido. Cuando te caben dos informaciones en portada y otras pocas en el interior. Tú puedes tener quince, y que de ahí vas a tener dos que son importantes por la figura que estaba (porque es alguien de la alta dirección). Ese también es un gran limitante, la cantidad, lo aburrido que es. Estamos hablando del periódico juvenil que es todo gris y azul, es aburridísimo. Pasa porque hasta la forma, el empaquetado, te desfavorece.

Sara: ¿Puedes comentar un poquito sobre el acceso de las fuentes?

RB12: Las fuentes siguen siendo una dificultad. Lo que pasa es que ahora el Partido ayuda un poquito más todavía, el Partido es ahora más proactivo. Hablo del Partido porque no se puede olvidar que, como no hay un Ministerio de Prensa, el Partido es la estructura superior nuestra. Cuando uno entra constitucionalmente en el art. 5, es la fuerza dirigente superior de la sociedad y del estado. Lo que pasa es que a nosotros nos llega más directamente, es parte de nuestra familia, porque estructuralmente nosotros nos subordinamos a un Departamento Ideológico del Comité Central. La sociedad entera se dirige por el Partido, como te decía, institucionalmente. El partido ha sido más proactivo y esa es una de las virtudes. Si una fuente no nos quiere darnos una entrevista, la dirección llama al Partido y nos están dando la información al otro día. Pasa así, pero no debería pasar. ¿Te imaginas que la máxima estructura de dirección del país tenga que estar mediando esos procesos? No debería pasar.

Porque la prensa sigue siendo timorata. Porque, ¿quién te dice que no puedes emplazar a ese funcionario que no te quiso atender? Nosotros somos un poquito conservadores, todavía. Eso pasa por el desmontaje cultural que tenemos que ir viviendo, porque nadie a nosotros nos ha dicho que no podemos emplazarlo públicamente. Todo se puede hacer, con mucho cuidado, con muchos equilibrios. Yo digo con sentido moral. Yo no voy a hablar de la imparcialidad ni de la parcialidad, porque eso no existe ni en el periodismo ni en nada. Pero sí con un sentido de principios, y tienes que tener ese rasero de la justicia presente, aunque sea tan subjetiva y pase por tantas miradas.

También el acceso a las fuentes se complejiza. Como te digo también, a veces hemos creado estructuras de comunicación (esto es por el desconocimiento) en diferentes ministerios que, en vez de ser estructuras de facilitación, son espacios para torpedear, y entonces te burocratiza más el proceso. Llamas, ellos te dicen que es la viceministra la que atiende, entonces la viceministra te busca el funcionario más idóneo, entonces, tú a un funcionario en la calle le preguntas. Y también las personas tienen miedo a veces, porque no hay una cultura de tratar con los medios. A veces hay ignorancia por parte de los políticos (hablo de todos los funcionarios). Hay personas que le tiene miedo a la prensa, porque le han tenido miedo a la prensa en otro escenario, distante, de otra altura.

Como que es un espacio para los grandes dirigentes. No, no. Ese tiene que ser un espacio para todos. Ellos pueden pensar, a veces, ¿diré lo correcto? Y a veces pueden meter la pata, pero por sus propias ignorancias de su propia actividad. Eso ha pasado, eso está pasando, a veces te dicen que no, que la semana que viene, y entonces se pasa un mes y se te enfría la agenda, u otro te da el golpe, y también pasa porque a veces jerarquizan al *Granma* porque es el periódico oficial. Nosotros tenemos como política que cuando *Granma* saca algo, aunque nosotros lo tengamos listo para salir y con otra forma y otro estilo de presentación, no lo publicamos. Por una cuestión de no coincidir, por una cuestión de prestigio, de dignidad del medio, y de no repetirnos.

Entonces, otro de los defectos que tiene la prensa es el espacio, el maldito espacio. *Juventud Rebelde* tiene unos 250 mil ejemplares, y *Granma* unos 300 mil. Cuando sumas son 550 mil. Te estoy hablando de los dos únicos periódicos que salen a diario. Te estoy hablando de 550 mil para 11 millones. Es muy insuficiente, muy, muy insuficiente. Así explico que las portadas de ambos diarios a veces sean iguales, porque como son cosas de máxima importancia como fue este encuentro de la CELAC con los países del BRIC en su cuarta cumbre. Cuba es parte de la dirección pro témpore de la CELAC. Asuntos cardinales, esos tienen que estar en los dos periódicos. Otro de los defectos es que ahora existe una especie de prensa presidencial, y esa prensa presidencial creo que adolece también de la costumbre de si usted está haciendo esa cobertura, haga dos versiones, una para *Granma* y una para *Juventud Rebelde*. No es la misma, es un facilismo. Sé que la impronta de la cobertura es regular, pero dos, no una, sin dejar de decir lo mismo, con una presentación diferente. Esa es una dolencia que tenemos, que se repiten con la misma forma y con el mismo esquema de presentación. Yo creo que ahí hemos relacionado lo estructural con lo superestructural. También te digo cómo piensan los periodistas, que están esperando a que los llamen porque tienen miedo hacer algo por su cuenta y que no sea lo que se les jerarquice en el espacio.

Sara: ¿Tú crees que ahora hay un momento de cambio sobre el papel del periodismo en la sociedad cubana?

RB12: Creo que hay una visión de cambio porque yo, que estoy dirigiendo un medio, tengo otra visión. Lo que pasa, a veces, es que lo que tú quieres no lo consigues, porque también hay procesos culturales que son difíciles de desmontar, y por ahí pasa todo. Entonces, ese que tú quieres que piense a la misma velocidad que tú, no pasa. Por ejemplo, yo ahora estoy frente al 26 de julio, esa es una fecha histórica. Yo llamé a mis dos redacciones, las que yo atiendo son digitales, *Soy Cuba*, que es un periódico digital nuevo nuestro que tiene ocho meses nada más, y la redacción digital. Nosotros no tenemos la maldita circunstancia del espacio. Nosotros podemos crear todo lo que se nos ocurra (eso no pasaría como el espacio más rígido que es el físico). Y yo les digo: Preséntenme

una estrategia digital de cara al 26 de julio, porque yo siento también que las fechas de la Revolución hay que llenarlas de una simbología nueva, atractiva, diferente, y el que se cubra tanto hace que se caiga también en lugares comunes, porque son muchos años también de herencia. Y ellos no sabían en un inicio cómo romper la inercia, estoy hablando de gente joven, menores que yo. Y cuando tú dices: ¡Basta! Vamos a hacer esto, vamos a generar... También pasa por que ellos empiecen a generar. Hay que cambiar la manera, las formas, los métodos. Si te permite una comunicación más interactiva con los lectores, hazla.

Sara: ¿Cómo llevas eso a lo que luego se va a imprimir?

RB12: Allá voy. Eso pasa por la polivalencia. Lo que se hace en la web, esas cosas nuevas después deberían generar un impacto, deberían alimentar el espacio físico. ¿Qué nos pasa? Como tenemos las redacciones tradicionales, como tenemos las redacciones web, las redacciones nacionales, las redacciones culturales. Es como... Vamos a pensar lo que le mandamos hacer a las redacciones nacionales. Porque tú mandas a gente, pasando mil trabajos como tú sabes, y viene su cobertura. Vas a ver que igual la cobertura web es mejor, y yo la jerarquizaría. Pero, ¿qué pasa? Es el como ese compromiso el jefe. –Ay, mis pobres, que fueron allá, que se sacrificaron, que tengo que estimularlos porque están tan mal asalariados... Es muy complejo entender esto, hay que vivirlo. Pasa por ahí.

Hemos dado pasitos de avance, pero son gateos, hemos gateado. Hemos logrado que ciertas cosas para la web primero se hagan ahí, y luego vayan al papel. Por ejemplo, hay muchas cosas en Cuba que van al papel, pero se demoran más porque dependen de las páginas ya hechas que están esperando, se demoran un mes. Yo tenía una entrevista sobre el patriotismo y se publicó dos meses después en el impreso. Y es, para mí, la mejor entrevista que se ha publicado en el periódico este año. Una entrevista a dos páginas a un joven que es doctor, joven con 31 años nada más, ¡con un conocimiento! Una entrevista interesantísima que, además, es sobre el patriotismo. ¿Cómo entender el patriotismo en la Cuba actual, que no es la del 59? Se ha modificado. Es un concepto importantísimo y se pasó dos meses para salir. Pero, ¿por qué eso nos pasa? ¿Por qué no alguien no quiere que se publique? No. Porque tienes otros trabajos y pasa por ese consenso que se construye en ese Consejo, por las defensas, pasa por muchas mediaciones internas nuestras. Es por la organización, por la manera de pensarlo. Ahora, ¿qué pasa? Los que están en *Soy Cuba* son jovencitos, todos son menores de treinta años. Pero es muy cómico, porque dile a un profesional que tenga cincuenta años que te publique sólo en la web. Eso es como ser un periodista clandestino, porque nadie te conoce, porque no estás empoderado ni legitimado públicamente. La gente, si no se ve en el papel, es como si no hubiese trabajado. Sólo los jóvenes son los que lo piensan así. Las nuevas generaciones son sólo las que no lo ven así.

Sin embargo los nuevos periodistas que se incorporan van tanto a la parte escrita como a la web. Sí, a los dos, lo que pasa es que siempre quieren el impreso, porque tienen más lectores. Yo introduje un método nuevo que nos ha demostrado su pertinencia. Como dirijo a los fotógrafos, les digo que todos los días me tienen que dar una fotogalería para la web. Ellos se quejaban porque no tenían espacios en el impreso para hacer los fotorreportajes, pues ahora tienen espacio en la web. ¿Piensas que lo aprovechan? No lo aprovechan. Ya les he dicho a los editores de la página web que busquen las cosas del mundo, aunque tengan que buscar en otros medios. Búsquenmelo, porque quiero que haya una propuesta editorial visual para que visiten mi página. Empezaron, y ya lo están dejando.

Como te digo eso, también muchos periodistas nuestros están en dos o tres trabajos. Por ejemplo, yo hago los reportes de la Mesa Redonda todos los días para una página web, de dos a 4 de la mañana, y eso implica un desgaste físico para mí. Cuando termino aquí, tengo un programa en la radio también. ¿Por qué? Porque mi salario es insuficiente. Eso está marcando otras circunstancias. Yo, por ejemplo, me concentro y trato de poner todas mis energías en función del periódico. Pero

un periodista que está en dos y tres trabajos, que en el mundo es así... ¿Qué pasa? Nosotros somos tan soñadores. Yo quiero que lo que salga en mi periódico sea lo mejor, lo más grande, lo más brillante. Pero yo sé que si una persona está en otros trabajos no puede dar los mismos rendimientos que si fuera mi pluma exclusiva. Y lo nosotros lo que quisiéramos como Revolución, al fin, es seguir defendiendo el ideal del ideal. En otros países sé que pasa, pero no me interesa ese modelo. Yo lo que quiero es perfeccionar mi modelo, pero pasa por esa coyuntura económica. Insisto mucho en lo económico, insisto mucho en las herencias culturales que son muy difíciles de cambiar, porque todas esas cosas están permeando el asunto.

Sara: Algo que me sorprende mucho es que desde instancias políticas, desde los ochenta, siempre se ha hablado de esa necesidad de hacer el periodismo más profesional, más independiente de las instancias políticas, más promotor de debate pero, ¿se ha conseguido hasta ahora?

RB12: Creo que se ha conseguido. Este es un ejemplo de que se ha conseguido. Nosotros a veces somos muy injustos con nosotros mismos. Ese afán de mejoramiento a veces nos hace olvidar muchas cosas. De hecho esta propuesta editorial surge por eso (señala el libro). Yo lo tengo como un referente. José Martí decía que esta era una profesión muy ingrata porque estaba condenada a morir en 24 horas. El periódico está condenado a morir en 24 horas. Con esa vocación martiana se defendió una propuesta editorial como esta, para demostrarle a las personas que aquí hay un pensamiento crítico. Si te lees esto dirías “son más críticos ellos que quizás una agencia mediada ideológicamente por otro propósitos”. Somos críticos. Y ese otro libro que te digo, *La cuadratura del círculo*, es también sobre lo mismo (tengo que regalártelo). Y fue una selección mínima. Recuerdo que se me quedaron muchos. Recuerdo que hicimos un trabajo sobre la migración interna, nos metimos en barrios marginales (que nos duele mucho que existan, pero existen y convivimos con ellos), quizás no en los niveles que están en otros países pero sí los tenemos y hay que transformarlos. Hicimos trabajos del robo y la alteración de los productos en las tiendas en divisa, y todo eso se quedó fuera porque hay un espacio finito y están ahí, hechos por *Juventud Rebelde*, por este equipo de reporteros.

Más que atrevidos, trabajamos con tesis profundas, interesantes. Sí se han hecho cosas. Antes no hicimos este intento editorial que hubiese sido muy valioso. No estamos innovando. Hay temas que nosotros sacamos como si fuera normal y ya están, se hicieron en su momento. Hay trabajos muy interesantes por ejemplo que ha hecho *Trabajadores* sobre el mismo envejecimiento poblacional, sobre la natalidad en Cuba, sobre cosas muy serias, muy angustiosas, sobre los desestímulos laborales. Por ejemplo, yo recuerdo que le hicimos una entrevista a Fernando Martínez Heredia y me acuerdo que el centro, me lo propuso mi jefe, me dijo, RB12, léete este libro. Él fue el que me dijo que me centrara en lo más singular de ese libro, en los dogmas del socialismo, y fue una entrevista a dos páginas sobre todos los dogmas que tenía el socialismo, que tenía que superar, que nos habían hecho mucho daño. Esos esquemas de actuación, esos esquemas de pensamiento que nos viciaban la vida y que había que superar. Fue una entrevista irreverente, atrevida y ofrece luces sobre nuestra realidad. Te digo esa, pero esa no es la mejor que se ha hecho. Se han hecho cosas muy valiosas. Te lo menciono a él porque el valor de la entrevista es él mismo, el entrevistado. Por eso la saqué a colación. En esa del patriotismo es esencial lo que se dice, lo que se debate. Creo que a veces, de las malas prácticas, el acomodamiento intelectual, eso también nos pasa. Hay acomodamiento intelectual, y hay quien se acostumbró a hacer la gacetilla, y a marcar todos los días, y ya se quedó ahí. Y a ese, la propia vida le pasa por arriba. Pero él no siente que la vida le pasa por arriba porque él, haciendo esa gacetilla, o haciendo la gran entrevista o el gran súper reportaje, está cobrando lo mismo que el otro. Y ahí hay otro desestímulo en la forma de pago. Eso también nos hace daño y eso genera acomodamiento, genera ese tipo de culturas profesionales tan desfiguradas.

Sara: ¿Qué elementos crees que han influenciado más en el convencimiento de intentar dejar es periodismo más acomodaticio?

RB12: Si tú me preguntas hoy de qué depende eso en *Juventud Rebelde*, es que haya personas con ganas de hacer. Ya. No depende de más nada. Bueno, perdón. Esto también es un facilismo mío, lo estoy reduciendo a un ideal. Para mí, si me preguntas de qué es lo máximo que depende, te diría que haya personas con ganas de hacerlo. Desde la dirección está siempre uno con deseos (yo estoy ahora de guardia editorial)... Yo quiero que lo que yo apruebe, lo que pase hoy por mis manos, sea algo con lo que yo esté feliz. Y con lo que yo como subdirectora estoy feliz es con cosas problemáticas, bien confeccionadas, con buen acabado en la presentación, pero que también me hablen de la realidad de mi país. Eso de que hay una fábrica... Nada, nada. ¿Qué porquería es esto, todas las tardes? **¡Esto es una brujería!** Esto es la prueba de que no estoy conforme, y decido. Por eso te digo que depende de las ganas de la gente de hacer. Yo estuve cinco años muy activa como reportera de fila, y cuando yo lo era, lo que más hacía era eso, era lo que me gustaba, lo que me alimentaba. Después tuve otros caminos de dirección.

Cuando dirigía al grupo de corresponsables en provincia les pedía trabajos problemáticos. ¿Qué pasaba? Que cuando ibas a hacer un trabajo problemático **se ‘marcaban’** (¿?) con las autoridades. Porque ya la gente nos miraba con malas... les molesta. Tengo dos incendiarios, yo los llamo así. Ellos están con ganas de hacer, con ganas de cambiarlo todo. Pero tengo diez que están lo mismo con lo mismo porque se acomodaron. Entonces, cuando esos dos están de incendiarios, sus provincias dicen: “Concho la mía es la única que sale con mala cara en el periódico”. Y los que dirigen en las provincias no quieren eso, porque se les va la vida ahí. Entonces entran en contradicción con su corresponsal. Y una, como editora tiene que ser una equilibrista. No puedo marcar tanto la provincia. Cuando yo lo que quiero es que me saquen cosas problemáticas todos los días. Pero no puedes, porque los otros están rezagados, acomodados.

¿Pero quiénes son los que más ganas tienen de hacer? ¿Los que tienen ganas de conquistar el mundo? Casi son los jóvenes porque están empezando. Porque quieren conquistar un lugar en el mundo, un estatus, quieren hacerse de un nombre, pero a quienes están acomodados no les interesa. Hay algunos que te dicen: -Yo voy de regreso. Pasa hasta por la instancia psicológica de esa persona y no la puedes culpar, o por los momentos que vivió. A lo mejor en otras épocas fue regañado, porque si aquí, si tú te equivocas, nadie es expulsado de la prensa, nadie es desmoralizado. Se le llama con una prudencia y, si se equivoca un periodista, el primero que se siente mal es el director, porque si al periodista se le va una cifra mal a mí me duele porque tú sientes que el periódico es tuyo aunque no lo sea, aunque sea un medio del estado, del país. Cuando a nosotros se nos va algo, me da vergüenza pública. Te estoy siendo totalmente honesta, no podría hablarte de otra manera.

Otro de los defectos: Yo soy amante de la organización (aunque no lo aparente, bromeando). Soy muy amante de la organización profesional. Las ideas más locas, más novedosas, a lo mejor surgen por la genialidad de alguien. Pero yo creo en los sistemas, yo creo en la institucionalidad del medio, y a veces creo que somos un poquito regados, y yo creo que a veces se nos ocurre algo y ya lo planteamos, o el aliento de un jefe... Y las cosas no pueden ser así, creo que hay que planificar todos los meses tu agenda, yo creo que si te viene una fecha tienes que pensarla. Los muchachos que trabajaban conmigo se quedaban un poco así, un poco descolocados, porque no estaban habituados a eso, pero aunque sea muy jovencita para ellos, los sorprendía.

Esa es otra de las novedades la prensa, que personas muy jóvenes están dirigiendo y entonces muchos aquí de los dirigentes que tenemos son más jóvenes: Mi jefe de la redacción digital tiene 31 años, mi jefe de la publicación *Soy Cuba* tiene 27 años, mi jefe de corresponsales tiene 30 años, yo fui jefa de corresponsables con 25 años. Tenemos un grupo de redacciones con personas jóvenes. Eso es un voto de confianza y creo que esa es una fortaleza que hay.

Pero a esos jóvenes también hay que enseñarlos a hacer, tienen que aprender de las mejores prácticas, de las mejores herencias. Yo que tengo 30 años nada más también quiero enseñarles mi estilo. Tienes que confiar en que hay una manera de hacer. Yo por ejemplo les digo a la redacción digital, a quince días, creo que me pasé. –Pásenmelo por escrito. Lo apruebo, o no. Y no lo aprobé. –Es muy poco todavía, les dije. Tienen que soñar más. Hay que soñar más. Claro, el primero de mayo también es lo mismo. Yo atiendo por ejemplo a los caricaturistas. Les decía, por ejemplo, quiero una caricatura del primero de mayo. Y ellos me decía, –Pero, ¿por qué? Eso no es inspirador. Lo miran todo formalmente, están viciados. ¿Por qué tienes que hacer la bandera con la marcha? ¿Por qué? ¿Por qué centran su energía creativa sólo en la marcha? Aunque sea una marcha estruendosa. ¿Por qué? Si se pueden hacer caricaturas de crítica social sobre las angustias de los trabajadores. Cuando les dije eso, me dijeron: –Ah, pero eso es diferente. ¿Quiénes están marchando, no son trabajadores? Se trata de mirar las cosas de otra manera. Todas esas cosas yo siento que hay que escribirlas, hay patentizarlas y aprobarlas en un Consejo, y después, controlarlas. Las cosas hay que preverlas así, de lo contrario no salen. Esa es mi visión, mi mirada organizativa sobre las cosas, y creo que ahí hay flaquezas. (Solicita una copia de la transcripción 1.01.42). Creo que estamos hablando de un grupo de cosas interesantes.

Sara: La investigadora pregunta sobre la cobertura de temas relevantes para la nación, y de las comisiones que controlaba las publicaciones sobre los lineamientos.

RB12: Creo que eso tiene su justificación. Sería muy injusta si los catalogara de personas acéfalas por promover algo como eso. Formó parte de su desconocimiento y de las circunstancias que se estaban viviendo. Yo no creo que sean algo menor, los lineamientos. Los lineamientos implican una transformación en muchas de las prédicas y la superación de muchos de los errores. La Revolución, con esta nueva transformación, yo creo que ha hecho uno de los ejercicios más difíciles. Creo que nada ha sido fácil para la Revolución, nunca lo ha sido. Pero en los últimos tiempos ha habido una única cosa diferente, y es que no está Fidel. Y el magnetismo de Fidel... Este es un país romántico, fidelista, (mira dónde yo lo tengo) culturalmente marcado por eso. Y entonces, de buenas a primeras, esa transición implica también peligros, riesgos, sobre todo porque no tienes a Fidel, no tienes al enamorado de masas. Lo tienes, pero no asumiendo el liderazgo de ese proceso. Tienes a Raúl, que es un hombre tan fiel a la Revolución como el mismo Fidel, tan amante de lo que está haciendo. Pero, ¿qué pasa? Que Raúl no solo está asumiendo la transición del poder, sino que a la vez que está asumiendo el poder está armando la transición de él. Son dos momentos: él está heredando, y a la vez está preparando su transición. Entonces, ese es un momento muy difícil porque él está diciendo: –Ni está Fidel, ni voy a estar yo. Este país tiene que ser tan fuerte... Ellos quieren tanto a la Revolución, que están preparando que la Revolución no se vaya con ellos. Y eso es algo muy duro, muy cardinal. Esa es la circunstancia diferente. Una circunstancia extraordinaria.

Sara: ¿Crees que ese cambio llegó con el Congreso del Partido?

RB12: No, un poquito antes. Esa comisión decía qué podía ir, y qué no podía ir. Qué palabras. Llegaron a boberías como hasta una palabra, porque formó parte del propio ejercicio de maduración hasta que se dieron cuenta que no era pertinente. ¿Qué persona más empoderada que el director de un medio para decidir lo que va o lo que no va? Porque es una persona también políticamente comprometida, amante de este país, de esta Revolución, de este mismo principio, que defendemos lo mismo. Yo no estoy aquí ni por un salario, ni por un privilegio. Yo estoy aquí por conciencia y porque defiende el sistema de principios que enarbola la Revolución. Yo creo que eso se superó. Ahora decimos, ¿dónde están los trabajos de seguimiento? Pero sí, son errores. Por suerte, ese fue un error que duró el menor tiempo posible. Si ese hubiese sido un lastre que hubiese permanecido muchos años, hubiese condenado definitivamente a la prensa. La estrategia no se hace con el nivel de seriedad que debería.

Sara: ¿Cómo ha influido el paradigma de plaza sitiada tanto en la cobertura informativa como en la legislación sobre medios en Cuba?

RB12: Debes tener en cuenta que lo legislado en materia de comunicación está refrendado en uno de los artículos refrendados Bueno, y sobre todo también es una letra que está interpretada en las regulaciones de la Unión de Periodistas de Cuba. Casi todas las normativas están presididas por ese Código de Ética que tiene elaborado. Es parte de la acción deontológica que debe tener cada periodista, y está ahí concebido estructuralmente todo lo que debe saber un periodista. Es una letra viva, es un documento que no es de consulta permanente, pero que sí tiene una vigencia en tanto no haya una ley de prensa. Ese es el mecanismo regulatorio.

Creo que esa sintomatología de plaza sitiada no es algo que se ha ido sedimentando gratuitamente. Es algo que tiene sus antecedentes, tiene todos sus precedentes y se fundamenta en el hecho de todas las constantes agresiones y la política hostil de Estados Unidos hacia Cuba, desde el mismo triunfo revolucionario. Desde el momento en que Cuba dejó de ser parte geográficamente, políticamente, aunque militarmente lo sigue siendo (ahí tenemos ocupada la Base Naval de Guantánamo, por ejemplo). Pero Cuba dejó de formar parte de su poderío en esta región y desde entonces ha sido una política totalmente de enfrentamiento, que no ha bajado la guardia ni ha disminuido, aunque esté Obama y pareciera que tenga una política que es mucho más benevolente, y no es así. Sabes cómo es el establishment en ese país. Ves ahora *Zunzuneo*, por ejemplo.

Hay una invasión siempre hacia Cuba. El mismo bloqueo. El bloqueo no es parte de nuestros argumentos, es una realidad. Tú vas ahora vas a buscar arroz en el mercado internacional y no puedes comprárselo a una transnacional que tenga negocios con Estados Unidos, es hasta extraterritorial, es un asunto multilateral, es muy complicado. Eso forma parte de la cultura del cubano, y si forma parte de la cultura de vida del cubano, ¿cómo no va a formar parte de la cultura mediática? Eso está ahí, circulando por las venas, en unas generaciones con mayor intensidad, en otras asumiéndolo menos desde la defensiva, y más desde la ofensiva. Cuba tiene que ganar eso en los medios de comunicación. Cuba no puede estar esperando qué dicen en su contra para salir en su defensa. Cuba tiene que estar todo el tiempo a la ofensiva, y sí tiene una influencia permanente el sentimiento de plaza sitiada porque es parte de la vida. Lo que pasa es que debe estar circundando sobre lo estratégico, no debe estar circundando sobre todo, aunque todas las cosas de nuestra vida pasen por ese tamiz. Creo que hay realidades que deben ser puestas sobre el papel porque lo que tú no escribas, lo que tú no digas, lo van a ocupar ellos con su propaganda desvirtuadora contra Cuba. Ese es mi modo de ver el asunto.

Sara: Estábamos hablando sobre la conveniencia y los planes de crear una legislación comunicativa en Cuba. Quería saber hacia dónde mira Cuba como modelo.

RB12: Siempre es muy difícil determinar qué modelo quiere Cuba, porque hay una praxis y hay también un modelo de actuación, aunque no esté en una ley de prensa, pero sí está ahí. Tampoco estamos ensayando un modo de actuación sobre la nada. Los que estamos hoy aquí somos herederos de un modo de actuación, de unos principios, somos herederos de una ética, de un modelo de democratización del espacio público que también es nuestra prensa. Yo creo que todas esas cosas están, lo que pasa que ha tenido esa responsabilidad la UPEC como organización. Lo que habría que hacer es que institucionalizar esos procesos en una ley de prensa, en un ministerio. Sí, es necesaria porque ya tendrías poderes legales para cuando una fuente se te niegue, poder llevarla a un proceso jurídico. Esos saltos son necesarios para ir cerrándole el ciclo a determinados fenómenos que hoy se pueden repetir porque se quedan en análisis deontológicos y éticos, y cuando usted lo lleva al área legal alcanza otro carácter.

Hoy, esa es una realidad que se resuelve con la presencia del Partido. No es que estemos tan desamparados tampoco, pero formaría parte de la institucionalización de país. Sabes que Cuba está

frente a otra etapa de su institucionalización, frente a una etapa de profundización de su institucionalización. Cuba es un país muy joven. ¡Qué pueden ser cincuenta y seis años en la historia! Algo muy joven. Entonces, hay que darle tiempo para seguir perfeccionando esos modos de actuación, que pasan por esas cosas que ya están escritas y que forman parte de nuestra actuación ciudadana. Y llevarlas a un cuerpo legalmente constituido.

Lo otro es que todo esto tiene que ir acompañado de una reformulación de la comunicación pública en el país. Como nosotros mismos decimos que la Revolución socialista para que triunfe tiene que ser internacional (porque una figura aislada, es decir, estarías tú en medio de todo eso que te empieza a desbordar), y que tiene que haber una sinergia regional, continental. Algo así tiene que pasar en Cuba. Nada hacemos con tener una ley de prensa, un ministerio de comunicación, si no hay una articulación coherente con las otras instituciones. Hay en Cuba, creo que en el proceso de institucionalización, mucha inmadurez en cuanto a esa información pública, las responsabilidades que tienen los ministerios. Creo que se tiene que lograr una articulación. Pero igual, se está aprendiendo. No es que haya un conocimiento en eso. Determinados ministerios, en algunos momentos, se convierten en torpederos de esa información por desconocimiento. Tiene que lograrse eso, pero tiene que lograrse articulado con la modificación del sistema de comunicación del país porque, para que se dé, tiene que ser sistémico, no puede ser aislado.

Sara: Te lo preguntaba porque el cuestionamiento del papel de los medios en la sociedad es un debate vivo en muchos países...

RB12: Hay todo un debate súper encendido. De ese debate tenemos muchas cosas superadas porque tuvimos una Revolución armada que permitió mayor radicalización en los procesos que cuando es constitucionalmente por las vías y los modelos democráticos establecidos, cuando es más difícil establecer cambios trascendentales. Pero igual, es una Revolución muy nueva, y hay otras cosas que están pasando hoy en América Latina, y nosotros tenemos que nutrirnos también de esas realidades. Nosotros no podemos creernos que todo lo que hemos hecho es la perfección. Tenemos que superarnos constantemente. Hay una frase que un día me la regaló Armando Hart que dice que la solución de un problema siempre genera nuevos problemas. El hecho de que tengamos un ministerio de comunicación, una ley de prensa, no significa que se vayan a resolver todos los problemas. Siempre habrá nuevos problemas, y entonces es por eso que te digo que siempre tendrá que ser una superación tras otra.

Armando Hart ha sido una de las figuras indispensables no sólo porque ha sido protagonista de la última etapa de la gesta liberadora antes del '59, sino que además es uno de los grandes intelectuales que tiene el país. Debes tener en cuenta que fue ministro de Educación, y como ministro encauzó aquella primera etapa de institucionalización del país hasta el '61 y luego hasta el '76. Cuando aquello, no había Ministerio de Cultura. El Ministerio de Educación era un poco el rector de todos aquellos procesos y también pasaba por el análisis subjetivo de la vida, y por ahí pasan los medios de comunicación.

Si te das cuenta, las cosas se fueron organizando poco a poco. Surgió la UPEC en el '63, y entonces ha sido algo que ha ido aprendiendo desde su surgimiento. Y Armando Hart fue una persona que dio luces sobre las cosas que se debían hacer. Siempre lo busco como un referente porque es una savia imprescindible. Todo su pensamiento es la esencia para entender la realidad del país. Te digo también que Hart tiene en su pensamiento mucho del pensamiento de Fidel. Creo que es Fidel quien sintetiza en esos discursos todos los procesos.

Sara: Una pregunta. Las reflexiones de Fidel, ¿dónde se publican en *Juventud Rebelde*?

RB12: Depende del tamaño. Cuando son pequeñas van en portada. En el proceso revolucionario cubano Fidel tiene una impronta más que sublime, y eso le da una connotación noticiosa. No sólo

en Cuba. Yo atiende la web y, bueno, los análisis que estamos haciendo indican que es lo que más leen los lectores. Basta con que pongamos una reflexión de Fidel para que sea lo más leído, con un público internacional que lo lee. Naturalmente es noticia. ¿Cómo para el mundo va a serlo y para nosotros no? Depende del tamaño, eso es lo que lo determina, porque obviamente la portada se considera desde esos balances. Sabes que él es extraordinariamente modesto como decía Martí, que toda la gloria del mundo cabe en un grano de maíz.

RA14 and RB13

Editors at *La Joven Cuba*

Matanzas, 27 September 2014

Sara: ¿Cómo sentisteis la necesidad de crear el blog?

RB13: Fue todo un proceso muy espontáneo, pero sí teníamos motivaciones. Las motivaciones era que veíamos como en la red Cuba se trataba de manera muy polarizada. O era todo muy bueno, muy bueno, muy bueno... o era todo muy malo, muy malo, muy malo.

RA14: ¿Era? Era más polarizado.

RB13: En 2010 había dos posiciones, y nosotros no veíamos la Cuba real que nosotros tocamos a diario. Nosotros participamos en los foros de debate de esos blogs o esas páginas o incluso páginas oficiales a dar nuestra opinión, a dar nuestros comentarios, y no eran publicados. Tampoco teníamos experiencia, ni sabíamos la diferencia entre un blog y un periódico digital, ni teníamos ninguna experiencia de qué cosa era comunicar, de qué cosa era hacer periodismo. Lo único que queríamos era dar nuestra opinión.

RA14: Ya yo había hecho en 2010 varias páginas web, la página web de mi facultad la había hecho yo. Yo tenía experiencia haciendo páginas web, pero un blog nunca lo había visto.

RB13: Pero eso es técnicamente, hacer una página web eso era la parte teórica. Nosotros fuimos muy empíricos. ¿Y la motivación? Nosotros dijimos, ¿por qué tenemos que contar con espacios ajenos cuando podemos hacer nuestro propio espacio? Y con una pretensión inicial de que al menos nos leyéramos nosotros mismos. Sin ninguna pretensión de que nos leyera mucha gente ni nada. Sino por lo menos tener un espacio y explicar Cuba como la veíamos nosotros, que era lo que más nos interesaba. Una visión de Cuba como la veíamos nosotros, una visión de Cuba desde una mirada de jóvenes cubanos desde una universidad. Que éramos profesores universitarios. Y esa fue la primera motivación.

RA14: Todo lo que sucedió después fue de forma empírica, fue un proceso de aprendizaje en el proceso.

RB13: Sí, no es que empezáramos a leer libros ni nada de eso.

RA14: Fuimos a crear un blog.

RB13: A ver, aprieto esta tecla, pulso aquí... Así, y mucha gente que nos fue enseñando. Hay, por qué no haces esta cosa, por qué no haces esta cosa... Y fuimos descubriendo el proceso.

RA14: Fue un proceso de descubrimiento.

RB13: Todo lo que era Internet y comunicar.

RA14: ¿Cómo fue que fuimos comunicando? De esa forma empírica. Veíamos, cuando íbamos escribiendo un mensaje, uy, esto está mal escrito. Veíamos cómo escribíamos nosotros los párrafos,

algo tan sencillo como los párrafos. Cuando tú escribes para Internet, nosotros escribíamos párrafos y oraciones, pero no se lo leía nadie. Y artículos de cinco o seis cuartillas, 3,000 caracteres, por ejemplo. Después nos íbamos dando cuenta. Mira los párrafos, cómo son. Y así fuimos aprendiendo. Un aprendizaje que fue de forma práctica, de forma artesanal.

Sara: ¿Qué tipo de vacío queráis llenar?

RA14: Esa pregunta ya nos la han hecho antes. Era una de las intenciones expresas del blog. Nosotros vimos la falta de un pensamiento matizado sobre la realidad cubana en Internet. Era la típica perspectiva mediática sobre Cuba de un infierno o un paraíso en la Tierra, pero que tenía que ver muy poco con realidades matizadas y un estudio de fenómenos, y ejemplos concretos de cosas que no estuvieran influidos políticamente, que no estuvieran haciendo concesiones a intereses extranjeros o a intereses gubernamentales. Entonces, queríamos escribir desde una perspectiva ciudadana. Queríamos escribir desde una perspectiva que apoyara lo que nosotros creíamos que la gente quería decir, y no tenía dónde hacerlo. Entonces, ese fue uno de los objetivos principales. Dar una voz matizada sobre la realidad que no hiciera concesiones, que no hiciera las concesiones habituales, que en ese momento es lo que más existía.

RB13: Ahora, hay un detalle que a veces también se nos acusaba de eso. Nosotros no pretendíamos ser la voz de los jóvenes cubanos. Queríamos ser una voz más, ni queríamos llenar todo el espacio, ni creeros el centro, porque a veces también fuimos acusados de eso. Nosotros queríamos formar parte de un movimiento que surgió en esa época, porque no fuimos los únicos. Junto con nosotros, espontáneamente, sin organizarnos tampoco, surgieron otras personas que pensaban como nosotros, y fuimos creando una pequeña comunidad. Y fuimos aprendiendo también. Uno aprendía una cosa y nos empezamos a compartir. Mira esta herramienta, qué buena está. Y empezamos a socializar, y empezamos a caminar. Es así como *La Joven Cuba* se convirtió en *La Joven...* Nunca pretendimos ser la voz de los jóvenes. No, somos unos jóvenes que tienen voz, pero nunca pretendimos ser la voz de los jóvenes.

RA14: Lo que pasa es que cuando empezamos el blog se notaba un vacío de jóvenes que opinaran con un pensamiento propio, y no típico, polarizado como el que existía. Se notaba la ausencia de eso en Internet. Por eso, yo creo que cuando empezamos con un acento joven a hablar de temas de la realidad cubana y no a hablar de temas locales, a hablar sobre fenómenos nacionales, y algunos internacionales también, cuando empezamos a hacer eso fuera de la perspectiva local eso tuvo un impacto muy fuerte. Por eso, la cantidad de visitas que tuvimos fueron por eso. Esa fue la audiencia que hemos intentado crear. Nosotros hemos sido muy insistentes en crear una comunidad fuera del blog. Una comunidad en la que nosotros no discriminamos políticamente a las personas, ni escogemos con la punta del dedo quiénes son los que deben pertenecer a ella. La comunidad de *LJC* la crea toda persona que quiera comentar en el blog y que quiera participar en la experiencia del blog. Tratamos de ser lo más críticos y lo más democráticos posible. Por ejemplo, una cuestión tan superficial como la apariencia del blog, nosotros intentamos dejarlo a la voluntad de los propios lectores. Cuando cambiamos la plantilla o cambiamos algo de eso, a quien primero le preguntamos es a ellos. Díganos, qué plantilla les gustaría. Díganos, que visualidad les gustaría. Tratamos de que la gente se sienta parte, de que ellos también puedan influir en el proyecto. Entonces, tratar de construir algo en colectivo, no hacer una construcción que sea nuestra, no para gestionar nosotros. Nosotros intentamos ser un vehículo para que lo que la gente quiere que sea *LJC*, o lo que debería ser *LCJ*, lo sea.

RB13: Y otro de nuestros discursos es también que *LJC* no somos solamente nosotros tres. Nosotros queremos que más gente se sume, y por eso nos preocupamos mucho porque todo el que nos quiera enviar un artículo, y que no tenga el espacio donde publicarlo, nosotros se lo publicamos. La prioridad para nosotros la tiene la ciudadanía, que no tiene acceso a blogs ni a Internet, y lo hemos hecho. Hay mucha gente ahí que no tenía acceso ni a Internet ni a blogs y

dieron su opinión, y nos usaron a nosotros para eso. Eso también es *LJC*. Es decir, nosotros podemos administrarlo, podemos sentir que somos los administradores. E incluso, en la universidad siempre tenemos también ese espíritu con los estudiantes y profesores. Quien quiera colaborar, quien quiera escribir en *LJC*, tenemos muchos colaboradores y muchas personas que escriben que no tienen blog. El blog es *LJC*, y publican su artículo, y no le cambiamos ni una sola letra. Ni lo corregimos, ni cambiamos ni siquiera su estilo. Que tenemos gente que le decimos compadre, no escribas más esos ladrillos, eso no te lo va a leer nadie. Pero si eso es lo que tú quieres escribir, bien.

RA14: En esencia, nosotros creemos que *LJC* tiene que ser un blog joven, que se mantenga joven. *LJC* no somos nosotros tres, nosotros estamos ya en un momento de administración, necesitamos que otras personas nos acompañen, para ir dejando también el blog y que *LJC* sea también una cosa de gente joven, cuando nosotros no seamos ya tan jóvenes, se queden con ella, ¿no? También depende de si es necesario que exista *LJC*. Porque si deja de ser necesario, si el periodismo en Cuba empieza a matizarse más, para hacer una mejor expresión de la realidad que tiene el país, quizás no sería tan necesaria, pero todavía sigue siendo necesaria.

RB13: Y nos dedicamos nosotros a nuestros proyectos de vida

RA14: Porque *LJC* no es el objetivo nuestro, *LJC* ha sido una herramienta que encontramos para la participación política en Cuba. Si se acaba el blog, porque ya no es necesario el blog, encontraremos otro vehículo. Vamos a encontrarlo a través de otra organización, a través de otra cosa que hagamos. Vamos a fundar, no sé, otra cosa. Lo que sea necesario hacer.

RA14: Internet es expresión de la realidad cubana, de los medios cubanos, o de los medios que escriben sobre Cuba. Cuba es un infierno en la Tierra para mucha prensa internacional, para buena parte de la prensa internacional. Y para buena parte de la prensa nacional, o para toda la prensa nacional, es el paraíso en la Tierra. Esa posición no es creíble, ni la una ni la otra, ni es cierta, ni la una ni la otra. Entonces, cada día se gana un poquito de terreno, así y todo, yo creo que las necesidades comunicativas que tiene el país son mucho mayores que la velocidad de cambio que tiene en este momento la prensa cubana. Es necesario cambiar el modelo comunicativo cubano mucho más rápido de lo que está cambiando. Entonces, es una carrera contrarreloj que veremos cómo se conduce.

Sara: ¿Cuáles son las principales virtudes de la prensa cubana en comparación con los blogs?

RA14: A ver, en primer lugar, tanto blogs como medios tradicionales en Internet, o en el espacio físico, todos comunican. Comunicar es un privilegio, en primer lugar. Creo que una de las ventajas que tiene Internet es que te permite llegar a un número amplio de personas, amplio en un sentido limitado, si eso existe, ¿no? Aunque sea contradictorio. Te permite a llegar a un número de personas que no tienes forma de hacerlo a través de los medios tradicionales. Por alguna regla del destino, aunque sé que no es el destino el que pone esas reglas, que son otras personas las que las ponen, por alguna regla la mayoría de cosas que se publican en Internet, que nosotros publicamos, son impublicables en los medios tradicionales cubanos. Las reglas de lo que está bien decir dentro de Cuba, y lo que está bien decir dentro de Cuba, no se aplican igual a Internet que a la prensa tradicional. Habría que ver por qué. ¿Acaso está bien que el grupo de personas que tienen internet pueda leer su opinión, pero está mal que los cubanos lean esa opinión?

RA14: Hay miedo a que la expresión de opiniones de forma masiva, provoque reacciones masivas en el país, provoque reacciones masivas en el país (repite). Todavía no tenemos los suficientes espacios de expresión de opiniones y de ideas, y de contrastar ideas unas con otras. Y entonces, hay mucho miedo de perder la hegemonía de la comunicación masiva en el país. Televisión, prensa escrita, eso sigue el modelo hegemónico cubano. Un modelo muy influenciado por la experiencia

soviética. Por las maltrechas experiencias de comunicación soviética que tienen muchos de los defectos que tenemos ahora nosotros. Es decir, que hemos agregado sus defectos a conciencia. Porque si lo sabemos, habría que ver entonces por qué no los cambiamos. Entonces, es complicado. Creo que los blogs ahora mismo hacen una presión muy saludable sobre los medios tradicionales porque ellos se han visto obligados a transformar algunas de sus cosas. Un fenómeno interesante es cómo un sector de la blogosfera está vinculado al periodismo, hay muchos periodistas jóvenes que tienen blogs, y eso indudablemente está influyendo por dentro al movimiento periodístico cubano. Que no estoy seguro de que... eso es bueno para el movimiento periodístico cubano, pero no estoy muy seguro de que eso sea bueno para la sociedad en general. A mí me gustaría vivir en una sociedad en la que un chofer de taxi pudiera tener un blog. Porque el país contado por periodistas principalmente puede ser un país deformado. Porque quizás la realidad del país no es la burbuja de los periodistas, ¿tú entiendes? Tú necesitas tener el diapasón de la sociedad. El médico que tenga un blog, el chofer que tenga un blog. Si tú le dejas todo eso solamente a un sector específico se puede deformar la imagen que hay sobre el país.

RB13: Bueno, sobre la pregunta que hiciste antes. Las ventajas que yo le veo a la prensa. Yo le veo una sola: es que tiene periodistas muy capaces, muy bien preparados. Lo que está muy subutilizada. Es lo que le veo yo que es favorable. Y a los blogs, y no a todos los blogs, es que tienen la autonomía que no tienen la prensa. En los blogs tenemos posibilidades de decir cosas que no puede decir la prensa. Que eso crea también limitaciones. Hoy la prensa cuenta hoy con los recursos que no tenemos los blogueros, como Internet. Nosotros, por ejemplo, no tenemos Internet. Pasamos mucho trabajo para poder ejercer a Internet. Nosotros hace más de 20 días que no administramos el blog. El blog está funcionando por otras variables que nosotros utilizamos, pero no podemos acceder, ni sabemos qué está sucediendo. A veces hasta en automático tenemos que dejarlo. Son muchas limitaciones que presenta que no tiene la prensa. La prensa tiene muy buenos periodistas que están sub-utilizados y que a veces se frustran. Nosotros que tenemos mucha relación con ellos lo vemos, que no les dejan realizarse profesionalmente.

RA14: A nosotros nos ha tocado también abordar temas que están en la agenda pública que se refieren a la sociedad cubana y que la mediática del país no refleja. Esos tabúes, nos ha tocado a nosotros escribir sobre ellos, hablar sobre ellos. Y eso a veces es muy incómodo. A ver, nosotros hemos asumido esa responsabilidad, no porque hayamos sido nosotros los elegidos que vamos a cambiar el curso del destino, sino porque nadie más lo hace. O muy poca gente lo hace, o tiene capacidad de hacerlo. ¿Quién tiene capacidad de hacerlo? Los medios tradicionales del país deberían hacerlo, deberían funcionar así, lo que pasa es que están regulados por un mecanismo que los limita mucho a hablar sobre esos temas que están en la agenda pública. Entonces, creo que el tema de subordinar la prensa en Cuba al aparato partidista es un tema muy grave. Un tema muy grave porque caricaturiza la política, y entonces la hace no creíble. Y el primero que sufre esa deformación, el primero que sufre eso, es el aparato partidista, es el propio partido. Queriendo controlar el flujo de la información lo que hace es dar las peores relaciones públicas que puede dar, el control excesivo.

Sara: ¿Cuáles son las principales desventajas de la prensa cubana en comparación con los blogs?

RA14: Vamos a empezar por los más graves. 1. Subordinación al partido, - RB13: por detrás, subordinación - el más grave, subordinación al partido. Lo contradictorio es que hace años, el primer secretario del partido del país, reclamó que tenía que haber una mejor prensa. El problema es que el principal freno y el mayor freno es el partido. Entonces, no se puede dar un discurso político público y esperar que haya un cambio real en eso si tú, teniendo las posibilidades reales de efectuar cambios en ese sistema no lo haces.

RB13: Cuando tú dices hay voluntad política, ¿habrá voluntad política real? No sé, me cuesta trabajo a mí creerlo...

RA14: Es muy fácil, porque si yo tengo voluntad política, a ver a ver...los dos quieren tomar la palabra) Pero es muy fácil, porque si yo soy el partido y establezco las reglas del juego, tienes que cumplirlas. A ver, aquí en Cuba hay un centralismo democrático, y eso sí que funciona bien. (Hay más actores) pero que pertenecen a ese centralismo democrático, y se rigen por ese centralismo democrático. Porque aquí no hay diez partidos, aquí hay uno solo, aquí hay uno solo (repite) y traza una estrategia y una política. Cuando traza una estrategia política todo el mundo tiene que cumplir. ¿Pero qué pasa? ¿Qué pasa? Mi opinión, mi opinión (repite). Hay un plano que queda en la subjetividad. ¿Qué es lo bueno y qué es lo malo? ¿Qué es lo correcto y qué es lo incorrecto? Hay una línea que todavía no se ha definido. Y entonces los periodistas tienden a autoconservarse. Y eso se llama autocensura. No puedo llegar ni a la línea. Porque, ¿cuéntame cuál es la línea de la crítica? ¿Hasta dónde es permisible la crítica? Hasta que a un decisor le molesta. Y a lo mejor, ese decisor es el que dice después en un discurso 'claro, hay que acabar con el secretismo'. Está bien, vamos a acabar con el secretismo, pero cuando yo pido una crítica, algo que se está haciendo secreto, y le molesta a ese decisor, que dijo su opinión discurso significa para mí (no se entiende). Entonces, ese es el discurso, pero la práctica dónde está. Entonces, como esa línea es imaginaria, ¿quién se atreve? Los que se han atrevido a pasar lo han pagado, lo han lamentado. Y entonces hay un sentido de autoconservación y de autodefensa entre los periodistas. Otro de los problemas, ¿cuál es el salario de un periodista? Muy bajo, es uno de los más bajos en Cuba. ¿Me entiendes? Entonces dicen, ¿vale la pena buscarme problemas? ¿Vale la pena? Y entonces tienden a acomodarse. Aquí en Cuba está muy mal pagado, porque son licenciados, ¿me entiendes? Y aquí en Cuba cuando tú ves la línea de los licenciados, cuánto gana un licenciado en economía, un profesor, un médico... ¿Cuánto gana un periodista?

RA14: A ver, voy a contestar a la pregunta que hiciste. A ver, yo creo que sí que hay voluntad política para cambiar el periodismo en el país, pero más que la voluntad, es el miedo a perder el control de la sociedad, y los mecanismos que regulan esa sociedad. Existe mucha voluntad política, pero existe aún más miedo a perder ese control. Entonces, el mecanismo automático de todo funcionario cubano es evitar buscarse un problema, evitar arriesgar. Porque arriesgar es peligroso. Algo muy contradictorio, porque una Revolución no puede caracterizarse ser conservadora. Ese es el pensamiento. Entonces, esas son las reglas del juego. Las reglas del juego son que va a haber poco cambio en el periodismo siempre que haya miedo a arriesgar algo, siempre que haya miedo a cambiar las cosas.

RB13: Porque no hay protección, no hay nada que regule.

RA14: Hay un estado de vulnerabilidad que llega a prácticamente todos los niveles de dirección en el país, desde la base hasta muy arriba. Hay un estado de vulnerabilidad de cometer un error que te cueste todo, te cueste los años de trabajo político, de funcionario, o como gente que administra alguna empresa o algo así. Hay un estado de vulnerabilidad muy grande, y una apreciación subjetiva de un jefe tuyo puede costarte el proyecto de vida tuyo. Entonces, eso condiciona mucho. El mecanismo de defensa natural, conservador, de autoconservación de las personas. No voy a hacer algo, no voy a arriesgarme con un periodismo que puede traerme problemas, y que generalmente los trae. Porque hoy un periodismo de opinión en Cuba es polémico. No voy a arriesgarme con esto porque, si haciéndolo así todo este tiempo me ha ido bien, ¿por qué lo voy a hacer distinto? ¡Que lo haga otro! Yo no lo voy a hacer. Más aún si tengo una familia que mantener, un carro con el que moverme.

RB13: Y si lo hago, ¿voy a ganar más? Voy a ganar más problemas. Es lo único que vas a ganar, que siempre vas a molestar a alguien. Cuando tú haces una crítica, te vas a ganar, enemigos, enemistades, y muchos problemas. Cuba es muy complejo, Cuba no es lo mismo que México, o Brasil, o España. Porque estamos agredidos, porque estamos en una constante agresión, y hay un sentimiento de autoconservación - suspiro de RA14- y de una plaza sitiada, y que los que dirigen

hoy se dirigen así. Y todo puede ser que sea utilizado por el enemigo, cualquier tipo de información puede que se convierta en boomerang, como forma de agresión. Por ejemplo, los temas económicos en Cuba, la información económica en Cuba, eso es secreto. (ie la deuda) La justificación es que... y con razón. Es que el departamento del tesoro tiene un departamento completo persiguiendo todas las transacciones financieras que hace Cuba. Entonces, eso te obliga a controlar. Pero ya estableciste una política, de que eso es información de seguridad nacional. Pero ahora, una empresa que es ineficiente, un trabajo investigativo, las causas, ¿por qué esa empresa es ineficiente? ¿Por qué una empresa lleva dos meses sin pagarles a los trabajadores? Todavía no he visto el primer reportaje. Y eso sucede y qué te hace sentir a ti que eso es, ¿dónde está la línea que dice que eso no es dar información de seguridad nacional? Si se para un dirigente y dice: -¿Pero es que esa información está dando, creándole armas al enemigo? ¿Está dando información secreta que nos puede afectar a la seguridad nacional? ¿Quién es el que decide sí o no? ¿El periodista? El periodista no tiene esa capacidad. Entonces dice, ¿voy a ganar más dinero? ¿Va a ser beneficioso para mí, para mi carrera? Y te dejo ya, que estás loco por hablar –a RA14. Sobre esa base de la realidad es que se mueven los periodistas cubanos, y esa es su principal limitación. Tienes un contexto en el que hay una agresión real, y otro contexto en el que el oportunismo necesita que sea así. Entonces proliferan los casos de corrupción. ¿Por qué los corruptos en Cuba no se denuncian públicamente? ¿Todavía? A ver, hubo un caso, hubo un ejemplo, se hizo un reportaje, de un periodista cubano que hizo un reportaje sobre un caso de corrupción, con pruebas. Fue el caso de comunales en Centro Habana y lo de la TRD del centro comercial de La Habana. Y ese corrió por Cuba entera, por las memorias. Pero si eso se hizo para la televisión, ¿por qué no lo pusieron en la televisión si al final lo vio Cuba entera? ¿Explíquenme cuál es la diferencia? Entonces, ¿los únicos que hablaron de eso de forma pública? Los blogs.

RA14: Nada más quería decir (yo no voy a hablar tanto), nada más te quería decir que la voluntad de cambiar el periodismo cubano es muy epidérmica. La realidad es que ahora mismo se apuesta más a ser conservador y a replegarse, a arriesgar poco que a hacer cosas nuevas. Y tú no puedes mejorar el periodismo con ese miedo a cambiar las cosas. Pero, además, un país que tiene miedo a cambiar cosas, porque su sistema tiene miedo a renovarse o lo hacen con ese nivel de inseguridad, es muy difícil que cualifique como un país revolucionario. Si queremos ser una revolución, no podemos tener ese miedo.

RB13: Y más cuando el proceso revolucionario tuyo constituye una alternativa diferente. Porque si tú haces un proyecto revolucionario para devolver el capitalismo aquí, eso fuera facilísimo, porque contarás con el apoyo de todos los países capitalistas del mundo. Pero cuando tú vas a construir el socialismo, los otros países dicen, espérate, eso no puede funcionar porque entonces mi hijo obrero va a querer construir una revolución socialista aquí en el país. Entonces hay que buscar la forma de hacer fracasar aquello.

RA14: Eso no es tan difícil, el hablar de eso. Es muy sencillo el análisis sobre eso. Toda gestión de un funcionario público cubano, o de una institución pública cubana, que no afecte a intereses de seguridad nacional que puedan convertirse en un perjuicio para el pueblo cubano son públicas, son públicos (repite). Toda gestión que haga un funcionario público cubano es pública, toda gestión que haga es pública, porque son funcionarios públicos y son servidores nuestros. Para recordarles lo que son. Porque cuadros, se ha convertido como que... la semántica en Cuba ha transformado las palabras y las ha cambiado. Ser revolucionario de alguna manera con el paso de las décadas se convirtió en ser conservadores. Ser tipo revolucionario era un tipo que no arriesgaba, que mantenía un discurso muy políticamente correcto. Para mucha gente, ser revolucionario es ser muy políticamente correcto. Y yo no conozco un revolucionario en la historia del mundo que haya sido políticamente correcto. Porque tú no puedes ser conservador y revolucionario a la misma vez. Entonces la semántica te robó la sociedad civil. La disidencia cubana se robó la sociedad civil. Hubo un montón de cosas. La semántica en Cuba se ha doblado de una manera que hemos tenido que renunciar a muchas palabras, y estamos tratando de salvar otras, de rescatarlas.

RB13: ¿Por qué se les llama a esas personas, a esos, disidentes? Porque nosotros no somos disidentes. No podemos declararnos disidentes. Nosotros somos una forma de ser disidentes, pero no podemos ni decir esa palabra. Ya me encasillan que los disidentes son aquellos. Son disidentes, son mercenarios, porque viven de eso.

A mí lo que más me molesta es escuchar un discurso crítico y tener que empezar con ese discurso: yo soy revolucionario. Que una persona diga, mira, yo soy revolucionario, pero veo esto mal, y esto mal, y esto mal, y esto mal. Y yo digo mira, ¿pero no hay una contradicción ahí? Si yo estoy haciendo una crítica, si yo lo que quiero es mejorar esto, ¿por qué yo tengo que partir del hecho de que yo tengo que decir que yo soy revolucionario? Yo hago la crítica, que me valoren como quieran. Además, yo a mis estudiantes les prohíbo. No me digáis nada de eso, porque es una redundancia. Yo parto de que tú eres revolucionario. No conozco a ningún joven que no quiera ser revolucionario, porque la esencia de un joven es ser revolucionario. ¿Por qué tienes que partir de eso para hacer una crítica? No la hagas, entonces. Existe cierto miedo. Antes aquí, cuando yo hacía una crítica social, de que algo estaba mal, te podían tildar. Esa es una actitud revolucionaria. Eso es lo que hacen los enemigos. Entonces, esa estigmatización, eso sí que perdura en las Ciencias Sociales. Ese miedo no se ha perdido, a hacer una crítica. En la Ciencias Sociales existe. No voy a hacer una crítica porque me busco problemas... No puedo tener un discurso diferente a la posición oficial porque me busco problemas. ¿Por qué dijo Raúl en su discurso hay que salir a buscarse problemas? Porque es mejor eso, porque no es mentira, cuando vas a salir a hacer una crítica social, lo único que vas a hacer es buscarte problemas, y a buscarte enemigos. ¿Quiénes son los enemigos tuyos? Los que quieren mantener las cosas como están, los que se han adaptado a la sociedad y no quieren que se cambie, porque han logrado un nivel de vida cómodo y estable. A esas personas sí que no les conviene lanzar una crítica, entonces eso es lo que les molesta. Y entonces esos que tienen cierta posición de poder, usan el poder para hacerte daño.

Sara: Entonces, ¿hay un enemigo interno, y no solamente externo?

RB13: Eso no lo dije yo, lo dijo Fidel, el 26 de noviembre de 2005. La Revolución, ni los gusanos, no los norteamericanos. Desde dentro es la única forma. No la van a ser los gusanos porque no tienen poder ninguno.

Sara: ¿Cómo jugáis con ese estar ‘dentro’ y ‘fuera’ de lo que se entiende por ser revolucionario?

RA14: ¿Qué es ser revolucionario? Ni los límites que ponen se siguen. Revolucionario en mi país es todo aquello que beneficia al bien común, de las personas. La subordinación de nuestros actos, a quien únicamente debe subordinarse es al bien común, a que favorezca la mayor cantidad de personas posibles. Al final se trata de una cuestión de lucha de clases, como todo el mundo. En Cuba hay una diferencia de clases muy grande, pero sólo hay una clase social. RB13: coincide.

RA14: Quizás el año que viene surja una nueva, yo tengo mis dudas con el surgimiento de una clase, están creando las condiciones para que surja.

RB13: Pero hoy existe una sola.

RA14: Hoy hay una sola. Todavía se han logrado mantener muchas diferencias de clase, pero dentro de una sola. Nunca me atrevo a ponerle nombre. Si quieres que te lo desarrolle más, te lo desarrollo. Al final en Cuba, los cubanos, tengan las posibilidades económicas que tengan, muchas o pocas, tienen que ir a los mismos hospitales, a las mismas escuelas, compartir muchos de los servicios sociales. Hay quienes tienen más posibilidades, y pueden hacerle un regalo al médico, a la maestra, pueden buscar algunos privilegios...

RB13: Lo que hay que cuidar es que en algunos sectores de la Habana ya se está dando un fenómeno de sectorización, en el que ya la barrios tienen un hospital con mejores condiciones, una escuela donde van niños con unas características específicas, y podemos estar viendo el resurgimiento de una nueva clase social en el país, si no tenemos cuidado.

RA14: Todavía no tenemos diferencia de clases, pero puede surgir una.

Sara: [Tras un intercambio sobre los valores y el rol del periodismo]. Volviendo al tema...

RA14: Primero que nada, ¿la lealtad tuya con quién es? Mi lealtad es con un proyecto socialista en Cuba, de izquierdas, la creación de un proyecto revolucionario en Cuba, al que yo le llamo revolución. Yo considero que ahí, desde hace muchas décadas, hay muchos cubanos que hay luchado por eso, y que han sufrido mucho por eso, se ha desangrado mucho el país por eso. Esa es mi lealtad. Mi lealtad al estado va a estar en dependencia de cómo yo crea que el estado está beneficiando la creación de ese proyecto socialista. Por eso, yo voy a alabar la gestión gubernamental sí creo que lo está haciendo bien a la creación de ese proyecto, y la voy a criticar si lo está haciendo mal. Pero mi lealtad hacia el proyecto, es hacia la revolución. Ese es el diapason. Ahí es donde se establece la diferencia.

Sara: Pero a veces habéis tenido problemas.

RA14: Sí... A nosotros no nos gusta mucho hablar de esas cosas para no caer en los clichés.

RB13: Primero, a nosotros no nos gusta hablar de eso porque no nos gusta repetirnos. Segundo, no nos gusta que la atención a *LJC* sea por los problemas que hemos tenido, que hemos tenido varios. No queremos que se vea a *LJC* como los tipos problemáticos. Cuando se escriba de *LJC*, que sea el discurso que tiene *LJC*, y no los problemas de *LJC*. Porque nuestro principal problema no es buscarnos problemas, es conectarnos. Acceder al blog, ese es nuestro principal problema.

RA14: Yo creo que nuestro principal problema es existencial. De la lucha que uno tiene por hacer un país mejor, por tener una sociedad mejor, y tener unos hijos viviendo en una sociedad mejor. Ese es el principal problema. Ya el tema de la conexión, esa es una herramienta que nosotros usamos para lograr el principal problema.

RB13: Lo otro ya es coyuntural. Tropezarnos con una crítica que hacemos, y que a alguien no le gusta, y nos quiere poner trabas. Y nosotros ya buscarnos la forma de resolver las trabas que nos ponen. No rendirnos. Más bien, gastamos nuestro propio salario, nuestro tiempo, tenemos muchos problemas. Entonces decimos, bueno, pues nos rendimos, ¿no? Pero no se lo vamos a poner tan fácil a esas personas. Me gusta más cuando nosotros logramos poner un granito de arena, y contribuir a que las personas piensen, esto está mal. Crear un poco de conciencia de que eso está bien, o está mal. Crear un poquito de debate. Que otros nos vean como ejemplo, que nos vean, bueno, esos muchachos están diciendo lo que piensan, no se están buscando problemas. Por eso intentamos minimizar los problemas para que se sumen otros a esta cosa, y que no seamos sólo los únicos.

Sara: Antes me decíais que los periodistas no se quieren buscar problemas, para lo que les pagan, y para lo que sirve. Entonces, ¿por qué vosotros estáis cómodos asumiendo ese papel?

RA14: A ver, nosotros no nos tomamos por periodistas. Así que no tenemos la presión de un editor, y de una política tradicional de un medio. La política la ponemos nosotros.

RB13: No nos pagan, tampoco.

RA14: Segundo, en Cuba el periodismo ha sufrido mucho, y el reconocimiento social al periodista. Antes un periodista era mucho más de lo que es ahora. Hace cincuenta años un periodista era una personalidad nacional, de la literatura. Ahora, un periodista, es una persona, sí, él es periodista, es pobrecito, es humilde. ¿Entiendes? El reconocimiento ha disminuido mucho. También, los salarios son tan bajo que muchos periodistas buscan otras posibilidades. Entonces, eso es un factor de influencia. Los blogueros y los periodistas son comunicadores todos, y debe existir una armonía, entre periodistas y blogueros que estudian cosas juntos. Otra cosa que quería decir. A veces nosotros vemos a los periodistas que están enfrascados en ser políticamente correctos, les da miedo que les rebajen el salario del mes, un salario que les hace mucha falta. Son gente muy sacrificada, la mayoría, y que tienen muchas necesidades, etc.etc. Pero eso resulta tan burdo y tan pirrio si lo comparas con un periodista en México que se juega la vida en su profesión. A ver, ¿tú estás preocupado porque te rebajen el salario, y aquí se están jugando la vida todos los días? Entonces, ¿hasta dónde tú eres periodista de verdad?

Sara: Bueno, pero ser periodista no significa que uno tenga que jugarse la vida todos los días.

No es lo que define ser periodista.

RB13: El americano ese que le arrancaron la cabeza... ¿Si quieres hacer bien tu trabajo, sí, no?

RA14: Para hacerlo en Cuba, sí que te la tienes que jugar.

RB13: Tienes que estar fajado siempre con ellos. Si no, no eres periodista.

RA14: Los mejores periodistas en Cuba, los que más reconocimiento social tienen en Cuba, son los que más arriesgan. ¿Tú te das cuenta, que los periodistas que más reconocimiento social tienen en Cuba son los que más arriesgan? RD10, Garcés... Entonces, no creo que sea casualidad.

Sara: [Me pregunta RB13 qué entiendo yo por un mal periodista, y respondo].

RB13: Y cuando tu medio cuando haces eso te recrimina, ¿qué haces? ¿Te atreves a decir que sigue siendo mal periodista? No tenemos periodistas. Buscando problemas, sí, nos buscamos problemas y los enfrentamos.

RA14: Se puede ser un buen periodista, y un mal periodista. Y se puede ser un buen bloguero, y un mal bloguero.

RB13: ¿Tú crees que el NYT es bueno? Porque no es en Cuba, es en todos lados. En EEUU también el 11 de septiembre, ningún periodista se atrevió a criticar la guerra, y los pocos que se atrevieron, fueron expulsados. Creo que fueron dos o tres nada más, que se alzaron contra la guerra de Iraq y Afganistán y los expulsaron de sus medios. Cuando ahora todo el mundo sabe que eso fue una mentira, que todo fue un cuento, que eso fue la mentira más grande.

Sara: Bueno, pero ahora estamos discutiendo ya cuáles son las funciones de un periodista. ¿Dar tu opinión? ¿Transmitir de la forma más fiel lo que dicen las fuentes? ¿Ofrecer análisis y promover el debate?

RA14: Primero, estás preguntando sobre las funciones de los periodistas a personas que no son periodistas. Nosotros no tenemos una opinión especializada en el tema. Nosotros te podemos decir cómo queremos que sean los blogueros. El rol social que tenemos los blogueros tiene mucho que ver con la libertad individual de la persona. Y de los intereses que mueven a la persona en su espacio. No se puede hacer un reduccionismo y decir que los blogs son para hablar de Cuba. Los blogs son para hablar de política, son para hablar de cine, para hablar de lo que tú quieres hablar. A

alguien se le ocurrió decir que no, que los blogs son para defender la revolución. No, no son para defender la revolución. Tú puedes defender la revolución, pero no son para eso. No me lo reduzcas.

Sara: Pero la prensa sí...

RA14: No, no me lo puedes reducir a eso, porque entonces se convierte en algo acartonado, que es no es creíble, que te deforma por completo, y que la gente ya no se identifica con eso. Creo que puede ser una de sus funciones, lo que pasa es que tú no lo puedes reducir a eso. Tú no le puedes exigir eso.

RB13: Y tú no puedes utilizar eso también para atacar a los periodistas. Porque si lo usas como mecanismo de control para tener amordazados a los periodistas, creo que es un error. Si eso es, está mal hecho. Nosotros nos podemos proponer 16 objetivos, pero no puede ser un objetivo para controlar.

Sara: Menciona los objetivos del periodismo cubano, según el resumen del último congreso de la UPEC. Estamos de acuerdo en que esos objetivos son ambiguos. Pero, ¿vosotros creéis que esos objetivos son ambiguos a propósito?

RA14 y RB13: Sí, claro.

RB13: Ahí es cuando el directivo tiene una herramienta para poder controlar. El que interpreta la línea es el directivo, es el que decide si te pasas o no te pasas. Entonces, como yo no estoy sé dónde está la línea, intento no sobrepasar la línea. Si la línea está allá, me mantengo bastante alejado.

RA14: No intento acercarme, no vaya a ser que me pase.

RB13: No vaya a ser que me pase.

Sara: ¿Qué significa ‘el momento adecuado’? ¿Significa que la población ‘no está preparada’?

RA14: Yo esto escribiendo un post sobre eso. Estoy escribiendo un post sobre ese tema de por qué nunca llega el momento ni el lugar adecuado. No existe.

RA14: A ver, el momento y el lugar adecuado nunca llegan. Eso forma parte del arsenal de pretextos que se usa para eso.

Sara: Vamos a hablar de los últimos años. ¿Vosotros creéis que vuestro blog hubiera sido posible en 2005?

RA14 y RB13: No.

Sara: ¿En 2007?

RA14: El blog fue posible cuando surgió.

Sara: Cometario y pregunta sobre el hecho de que las tesinas de tesis de la Facultad de Comunicación de la UH son muy críticas con la cobertura de los lineamientos, y que los alumnos exponen sus análisis delante de los máximos directivos de los medios. Si los alumnos pueden decir eso, debe ser porque lo que dice está dentro del límite de lo aceptable, de lo oficialmente correcto.

RA14: Él lo puede decir ahí, pero no lo puede decir públicamente.

RB13: Lo que pasa es que ese es un ambiente controlado. Internet no es un ambiente controlado. Nosotros en la universidad en una reunión con los profesores podemos decir RA14: Todo, lo que quieras.

RB13: ¿Qué pasa con internet? ¿Quién controla internet? Nadie.

Sara: Pero tenéis presiones indirectas.

RA14: Hay presiones, pero no mediaciones. Nosotros somos seres sociales. Entonces tú escribes de algo, y puede haber alguien en la familia que puede preocuparse, alguien de tu trabajo puede asustarse.

RB13: Primero, no ofendemos. Lo primero que trazamos son las líneas éticas. El respeto. Ninguna mentira.

RA14: Nosotros estamos tratando de hacer el mayor contraste de fuentes que podemos cuando se puede. Pero son recursos del periodismo que son muy fáciles de usar para alguien que trabaja en los medios, pero para nosotros es muy difícil y a veces imposible. Es una crítica acertada, porque hay muchos blogs que pecan de no hacer un contraste de fuentes y de publicar un poco a la ligera. Pero decir que todos los blogs pecan de eso es un reduccionismo, una generalización muy injusta, porque nosotros tratamos de contrastar fuentes.

RB13: Yo tengo una opinión diferente de eso. ¿El blog a quién representa? ¿A una institución? ¿Al gobierno? ¿A un periódico? ¿A una persona? ¿Quién es responsable, esa persona? Es tu responsabilidad, el publicar una noticia que sea verdad o sea mentira. La única presión social que te puedes recibir es la misma presión social que cuando tú le dices una mentira a alguien. Te vas a perder una persona que te es legal. Ahí es donde está la necesidad de contrastar fuentes y ser lo más objetivo posible en la información que estás dando. Pero todavía no me acuerdo que nosotros en *LJC* hayamos publicado una noticia. Nosotros no damos noticias. Nosotros usamos la información que está pública para hacer nuestros análisis para hacer nuestros análisis, y dar nuestra opinión. Usamos la información pública que está en internet, y que está en nuestra sociedad. A ver, nosotros no damos la noticia. No me acuerdo de haber dado nunca una noticia. Nosotros, esta noticia, esta noticia, esta noticia, va por ahí. La sociedad, nosotros, estamos interpretando esto, esto, y esto. Hay un ambiente que yo estoy respirando, una sensación, que yo estoy respirando en la sociedad, y que la transmito, una interpretación de un fenómeno social que está sucediendo. No es que yo esté dando una información, ni datos estadísticos, porque no tengo yo recursos para hacer una investigación. Evitamos mucho generalizar los problemas. No digas que ese es el problema. Di que ese es un problema. Eso es algo que aprendimos. Esa es mi opinión.

RA14: A eso quiero sumarle algo. Cualquier opinión que diga que los blogueros son poco serios porque no contrastan fuentes, porque no investigan en profundidad y eso, es una opinión que no tiene en cuenta las características de este país sencillamente porque los blogueros no tenemos acceso a esa información. Cuando yo llego a un lugar, a pedir una información, o a hacerle una entrevista a alguien, si soy un periodista, tengo muchas más posibilidades de llegar a la información. Si digo que soy un bloguero en Cuba, la gente automáticamente se aterra, porque tiene miedo.

RB13: Los blogueros aquí son tres o cuatro, y son todos contrarrevolucionarios.

RA14: Un bloguero disidente. Cuando la gente ve aquí un bloguero dice, un disidente. Entonces, cómo tú vas a contrastar fuentes. Bueno, si quieres mentir y decir que eres periodista. Pero no estás acreditado. Es muy difícil, no se nos puede pedir lo que nosotros no tenemos. Si ellos no lo tienen, nosotros lo tenemos menos.

Sara: Dos preguntas finales. ¿Cómo se informan hoy los cubanos? ¿Cómo os informáis vosotros? Desde hace algunos años, desde el Congreso de la UPEC de 2013, parece que el debate sobre la ‘Actualización’ cree un clima favorable para que los cambios se extiendan a la comunicación.

RA14: ¿Cómo no informamos? Los cubanos mayormente se informan por los medios tradicionales, que muchos cubanos han renunciado a informarse por ahí. En los últimos años, cada vez menos personas se informan por ahí, lo que no significa que muchos no sigan informándose por ahí. Creo que todavía (no se entiende). Pero han surgido nuevos actores en los medios cubanos. Han surgido los medios digitales, han surgido el paquete, mecanismos de información secundarios. Entonces, eso es como se informan los cubanos mayormente. Por medios tradicionales, por medios alternativos y por el paquete. Yo diría que los cubanos no están ávidos de comunicación política. Están tan saturados políticamente, de mala información política, que simplemente la mayoría de los cubanos han desconectado del tema político.

RB13: Le han hecho rechazo.

RA14: Le han hecho rechazo porque están saturados de mala comunicación política. Porque ni siquiera es una comunicación efectiva. De malos spots políticos, de malos discursos políticos, que han desconectado eso. Por eso también el que habla de subversión en Cuba, o de la disidencia que quiere buscar un levantamiento popular en Cuba, no ha sido posible, porque es que el cubano tampoco se levanta contra nada. Hay una desconexión del tema político. Entonces, creo que esa es una cosa muy concreta que hay en el caso cubano. En el caso específico de los blogueros cubanos, creo que nos informamos por Internet, básicamente. Cables de internet de noticias, y Facebook, y Twitter. Redes sociales e internet. Ese es el principal mecanismo. A ver, y el chat interno de Facebook también gestiona muchas cosas entre nosotros, de pasarnos cosas. Creo que sería interesante... Hasta ahora todo lo que ha ocurrido con los blogueros en Cuba ha sido espontáneo, ha sido de forma espontánea, no sé, creo que cada uno ha ido por su lado. Creo que sería muy interesante si grupos de blogueros comenzaran a participar activamente, y a opinar activamente sobre temas del país de manera organizada. Ha habido experimentos, pero se han desmovilizado luego.

RB13: Han surgido en momentos clave. Dos o tres veces.

RA14: Pero la presión que pueden ejercer los blogueros, sobre las políticas, y sobre los funcionarios que leen los blogs, el índice de funcionarios que lee los blogs no es pequeñito. Entonces, es muy elevado. Y entonces, yo puedo decirte que hay funcionarios que les preocupa más lo que diga un blog de ellos, que lo que diga un barrio entero de personas. Los blogs influyen más que la capacidad social de influir sobre eso (sobre la agenda de los medios y sobre las políticas). Los mecanismos de participación y de influencia sobre los funcionarios en Cuba están mediados por tantos escalones intermedios, que filtran mucho de la opinión popular, y al final es muy difícil participar. La participación se complica mucho. Es una participación muy formal, pero con poca efectividad real. ¿Qué pasó con los blogs? Los blogs de repente crearon un mecanismo por el cuál tú puedes participar de manera directa y pública. Entonces, los funcionarios sienten la presión de que un blog mira algo de su gestión. Ellos saben que, si lo dice un barrio entero, el barrio entero lo va a decir, pero no va a salir en ningún lugar, no va a ser público. Pero si lo dice un solo bloguero, va a ser público. Entonces hay funcionarios más preocupados por los blogueros que por un gran número de personas. Lo cual es una locura, ¿no? Tú deberías estar preocupado por la masividad de personas, no por un solo individuo.

Sara: Pero se preocuparían más si lo dijera *Granma*...

RA14: Se preocuparían más, claro, claro. Esa función la asumimos nosotros porque ellos no la asumen, los medios no la asumen. También es un poco anti-democrático. Yo siempre que hablo de esto declaro que ninguna asamblea de barrio nos escogió a nosotros para nosotros ser la opinión del pueblo. Nosotros no representamos al pueblo. Nosotros somos gente del pueblo que tiene la oportunidad de hacerlo, pero de manera muy anti-democrática. Ahí no hubo democracia ninguna. Nadie nos escogió para eso.

RB13: Y que nos transmitan un discurso.

RA14: Simplemente tenemos la posibilidad de hacerlo porque tenemos las herramientas para hacerlo. Me gusta creer también que la gente lee aquello con lo que se identifica.

RB13: A veces quisiera que no nos leyeran.

RA14: No, pero eso lo dice seguro por la presión que nosotros tenemos encima, ¿no?

RB13: Porque es más complejo. Antes nosotros nos sentíamos más tranquilos.

RA14: Al principio nosotros decíamos nuestras opiniones.

RB13: Con plena tranquilidad.

RA14: Con plena tranquilidad.

RB13: Ahora hay una responsabilidad. Incluso, el otro día estaba pensando... no me puedo atrever ni a dejarlo. Es decir, no voy a escribir más porque no quiero. No porque si digo un día eso.

RA14: No se sale, no hay salida. Risas.

RB13: Si un día yo digo que no quiero seguir escribiendo, la gente va a empezar a empezar a decir... ¿Qué fue lo que pasó?

RA14: ¿Oye qué te pasó?

RB13: ¿Qué te hicieron? Y entonces va a ser peor. Entonces lo que va a ser es peor.

RA14: Los temas que tienen que ver con la blogosfera cubana están magnificados, siempre me ha dado esa impresión. La capacidad de influencia que tiene un bloguero está por la posibilidad que tienen el bloguero de decir cosas que las demás personas no pueden hacer.

RB13: Y tampoco podemos medir. A veces uno dice, yo escribí una cosa. Y a veces no sabemos, ni tenemos conciencia nosotros del alcance que tiene, y a cuánta gente, y a quiénes y a qué nivel los sacude. Ni a veces sabemos tampoco si influyó, o si no influyó. A veces nos sorprende. ¿Tú lo leíste? Hace veinte años que no nos vemos y te dice: -Te estoy leyendo todos los días. ¿Por qué? Primero que no tiene ni Internet. Pero a veces circulan por otras vías, por correo.

RA14: Yo creo que hemos resumido eso, que lo que nosotros comenzamos como un hobby, y como una necesidad personal, se ha convertido en un ejercicio, en una responsabilidad pública. Somos funcionarios públicos prácticamente.

Sara: [Bromeando] Sois cuadros, ¿no?

RA14: Somos cuadros (risas). **RB13:** Somos cuadros.

RB13: A veces me cuesta trabajo pensar eso, claro, ¿y si no quiero seguir? ¿Por qué tengo que estar ahí liado? Uno siente ya una presión, una responsabilidad.

RA14: Estamos en un momento muy difícil ahora porque tenemos proyectos, tenemos investigaciones, tenemos otras cosas que se ven muy pospuestas, nos roba demasiado tiempo. Entonces, nuestros proyectos de vida han sufrido mucho también por el blog.

RB13: Y también pasa que *LJC* se convirtió también en un niño chiquito, como el hijo que uno ha visto crecer.

RB13: Yo, en lo personal estoy optimista. Como veo que se están moviendo las cosas. Lento para mi gusto. Muy lento. Desde que estoy leyendo algunas opiniones diferentes, desde que estoy viendo un debate crítico en algunos medios de prensa. ¿Me entiendes? Desde noticias que van un poquito a la calidad. Un ejemplo: En Cuba tú dices que a un funcionario lo pones contra la espada y la pared, eso era impensable, vamos. Y se atrevieron a ponerlo en público. Tú dices, bueno, hay algo que está cambiando ahí. El transporte público. Y empiezas a decir, bueno, hay cosas que se están moviendo. Tú lees la prensa y ves algunas noticias que empiezan a tocar ciertos temas. No todo lo que tú quisieras. No se están moviendo a la velocidad que el país necesita. No, el país necesita otra dirección. Pero por lo menos no ves estancamiento, ni retroceso. Aunque a veces, un poquito para adelante.

RA14: Yo también estoy optimista. Estoy optimista. No creo que el periodismo cubano cambie mucho en las condiciones actuales, en las reglas actuales del juego que hay no va a cambiar mucho más. Camina muy despacio. Pero, yo soy optimista con que cambien las reglas del juego que permitan que el periodismo cubano sea mucho más (¿?) que lo que es actualmente. Claro, la necesidad de que eso ocurra con velocidad es muy grande. Y la velocidad de respuesta que tiene hasta ahora mismo la institucionalidad cubana es muy lenta. Entonces, o hay que apurarse, o hay que hacer algo... Algo hay que hacer ahí que agite todo eso. Todos estos cambios no tienen una raíz institucional, o una raíz burocrática... Una raíz política. Pasan por el uso del poder. Pasan por la interpretación del poder de que cuál es la función del periodismo en Cuba, o de cuál es la función de los blogueros en Cuba. Hasta que no cambie su mirada sobre cuál es la función de la comunicación y de los blogs en Cuba, no van a cambiar los mecanismos que impiden un sano desenvolvimiento del periodismo y de la blogosfera cubana. Entonces, eso es lo que tiene que cambiar. Tiene que cambiar la forma de hacer política en Cuba; la forma en que la política interpreta el fenómeno mediático.

RB15

Editor at *La Chiringa de Cuba*

Havana, 23 September 2014

Sara: ¿Cómo creaste el blog?

RB15: Básicamente fue una necesidad de comunicación. Cuando te hace falta comunicar algo, y sobre todo cuando te hace falta tener un *feedback*, buscas algún motivo o alguna manera. La historia dice que, antes del triunfo de la Revolución, la gente pintaba carteles en contra del gobierno y eso generaba un estallido social, un malestar de las autoridades. En alguna medida, esto no se compara, pero bien pudiera verse como una necesidad de expresión que tienen ciertos grupos, con ciertos intereses. Ahí es donde viene naciendo la blogosfera, que se apropia de las herramientas de la web 2.0 para crear un espacio abierto, libre, sin que nadie te lo cuestione, y no un medio que tiene un editor, que tiene quien cuestione lo que puedes o no escribir, y te tienes que regir estrictamente por ahí. Sencillo, te creas tu blog en Internet y le pones tu impronta; lo haces muy tuyo.

Esa fue la idea de cómo surgió el blog. Te decía que al principio me encontraba noticias en Internet, las pegaba en mi email y se las enviaba a mis amigos. Nos pasábamos el día entero respondiéndonos con una coletilla de comentarios muy graciosos. Y entonces dije, bueno, estoy perdiendo el tiempo. La herramienta es el blog. Entré en *Wordpress* y creé el blog. ¿Cómo lo hice? Principalmente quería que marcara la diferencia. Me dije, yo no puedo hacer un blog como los hay en Cuba para replicar lo mismo que sale en *Granma* y en *Cubadebate*. Tengo que abrir un blog para, además de escribir las cosas que pienso sobre mi país, también para poner a debate cosas de las que no habla nadie, y cosas que todo el mundo comenta; para polemizar, para buscar un tipo de retroalimentación sobre cosas que la prensa ordinaria no ahonda y que a mí me gustaría ver cómo la gente quizás de mi edad, menores o mayores, ven ese fenómeno. Eso fue lo que hice.

Desde un principio comencé a tomar esa línea crítica, y no contra revolucionaria, sino polémica, porque creo que Cuba está muy necesitada de periodismo crítico, del periodismo que pone en crisis a dirigentes, a instituciones. De periodismo investigativo que revela cosas, como por ejemplo lo hizo AP con el tema de la subversión. Ese es un periodismo que puede revolucionar el mundo entero y eso falta. Y de algún modo se está haciendo desde la blogosfera. A veces con muy poca experiencia, porque no todos los blogueros somos periodistas o somos graduados de comunicación social (que algunas luces tenemos). Hay gente que comete muchos errores y muchos fallos.

Sara: ¿Qué tipo de fallos?

RB15: Fallos estilísticos, fallos en criterios, fallos de no citar fuentes, fallos de irte con la de trapo, de que alguien te dijo algo y lo publicaste. Tienes que tener fuentes, tienes que contrastarlas, tienes que buscar un estilo. Yo he buscado cosas que me ha dicho alguien que considero muy buena fuente y, sin embargo, no he tenido nada para soportarlo, para soportar esa afirmación. Sin embargo yo lo he presentado: yo digo, mira, me han dado esta información, no sé si será cierta o no, acudo a este medio para que ustedes mismos (yo no los estoy engañando a ustedes). De alguna medida estoy publicándolo y estoy dando una exclusiva. He publicado resoluciones de muchos ministerios. Por ejemplo, la tabla salarial de los médicos, tú sabes que les subieron el salario, yo tuve acceso a esa tabla salarial en cuanto a rango y especialidad. Bueno, dije que una fuente me había dado esto, dije

que es lo que se supone serán los aumentos salariales, pero la pongo a debate, y si alguno de ustedes tiene alguna información sobre esto por favor postearlo.

Una semana después la publica *CubaDebate*, 90% parecida a la mía. Lo que varió fueron los salarios a los técnicos de limpieza, de rayos X y varió cinco o seis pesos más. Ese es el tipo de tratamiento que uno le da a la información, pero estudié comunicación y sé que es un sacrilegio decirle a la gente que esto es lo último y que pueden confiar en esta información. Esa es la idea. Ha surgido un movimiento de blogueros muy grande, e incluso nos hemos organizado espontáneamente. Por ejemplo, hemos viajado el país entero en excursión. Vamos a las montañas, vamos al Pico Turquino, a lugares así donde la pasamos bien, nos conocemos.

Hay una anécdota interesante. La blogosfera cubana ha roto el estándar de cómo nos conocemos. Nos hemos conocido en las redes, en *Facebook*, en *Twitter*, y hemos hecho encuentros, nos saludamos y compartimos. Eso ha sucedido. Se hizo el primer encuentro de twitteros en la Habana, que se llamó *TweetHab*, que tuvo una versión en las provincias. Eso se ha regularizado. En parques, en el malecón, en cualquier lugar. Es conocernos.

Sara: Cuando hay un tema que quieren tratar, ¿también os organizáis?

RB15: Por ejemplo, hay temas que hemos querido darle una trascendencia tal y nos hemos organizado. El lunes que viene, por ejemplo, vamos a sacar una serie de post sobre un tema, y entonces cada cual desde su experiencia publica un post y en alguna medida salen 15, 20, 40 post sobre un tema desde diferentes ópticas, en distintas plataformas. Es súper interesante porque, además, yo he publicado el mío hoy, pero va y tú no pudiste hoy y lo publicaste mañana, y pasado mañana, y sigo con el ritmo del blog y nos publicamos el uno al otro. Se forma una especie de campaña que es muy interesante y se forman tremendos revolicos.

Después, traté de encontrarle un nombre original, que me identifique de alguna manera, porque no le iba a poner un nombre cualquiera. Y dije, algo que identifique a mi generación. La idea de mi blog es que lo que se publique ahí sean mis ideas, mis pensamientos, cómo veo la realidad de Cuba siendo un joven nacido en los años ochenta. Es muy diferente a la generación de los setenta y a la de los noventa. Aquella generación mía, tuvimos la mitad de aquello y la mitad de esto. Tiene que ser algo que identifique la época. No teníamos juguetes, pero arrancábamos una hoja y hacíamos una chiringa. Si entras al blog, ves que es el Malecón, la gente, y ves un bebé de segundo grado con un short rojo, una camisa y una pañoleta azul empujando una chiringa, porque así era cuando salíamos de la escuela hasta la casa. Le puse de Cuba porque como quiera que sea le da un sello, dice, bueno, por lo menos es de Cuba y los temas de Cuba siempre interesan. Además, me convenía para que en los buscadores el dominio Cuba estuviera. Entonces me hice un slogan que le explique a la gente qué cosa es. Por eso le puse “volando bien alto, pero con los pies en la tierra”. Volando bien alto serían mis ideas, mis verdades, mis pronunciamientos, estén equivocados o no. Yo me he equivocado mucho, lo reconozco también, no siempre he dado en la diana y he tenido que pedir disculpas, pero han sido muy pocas veces. Bueno, uno se equivoca.

Sara: ¿Te consideras periodista, bloguero o las dos cosas? ¿Cuál crees que es tu responsabilidad social?

RB15: ¿Periodista o bloguero? Digo que bloguero 100%. La vida me ha hecho ser periodista. A ver, alguna gracia he podido tener para poder hilar ideas sobre un tema, y he tenido la suerte de que a alguna gente le ha gustado y eso me ha abierto el camino en algunos medios, tanto nacionales como extranjeros, que me han permitido colaborar en sus espacios. Pero básicamente con el mismo estilo que llevo en el blog, un estilo muy personal. Me encanta el periodismo, me encanta bloguear porque es prácticamente un periodismo prohibido en Cuba, un periodismo en primera persona al cual se le tiene mucho miedo, mucha fobia, hay muchas visiones extrañas. Me gusta mucho porque

creo que una persona tiene mucho que contar, y creo en lo que las personas pueden pensar. Cuando a veces me tengo que salir de esa línea y tengo que hacer algo más serio como un reportaje, me lo siento en los tuétanos porque no es mi estilo. Me siento bloguero 100% por ciento. Periodista no a la fuerza, pero sí por necesidad.

Sara: ¿Cómo ves la responsabilidad?

RB15: En general, yo creo que la responsabilidad de los blogueros es contar su verdad, ya sea desde un blog de recetas de cocina, desde un blog que me encontré el otro día de un argentino que les explica a los usuarios cómo llegar a Canadá. Todas las facilidades para llegar a Canadá, para todo el que quiera aplicar a las facilidades que ofrece Canadá. Contar su verdad. Yo creo que, si algo falta en Cuba, o si algo ha primado en Cuba, es el verticalismo informativo. Los medios no siempre tienen la verdad, ni siempre comentan lo que les conviene, ni siempre cuentan lo que existe de verdad. Para mí, *Granma* y *Juventud Rebelde* han manipulado en Cuba durante muchísimo tiempo. También han dicho muchas verdades, a nosotros nos hace falta tener un periódico como *Juventud Rebelde* con las peleas en que estamos metidos. ¿Cómo han manipulado? Sencillamente, no contando algo que está sucediendo.

Sara: Cuando les pregunto a los periodistas cubanos, me dicen que una de las ventajas del periodismo es que siempre se dice la verdad, pero al mismo tiempo me dicen que no se dice toda la verdad...

RB15: Habría que partir de que las verdades siempre van a ser subjetivas. Tu verdad es tu verdad, la mía es la mía. Para mí, esconderle información al pueblo es manipular. Tema claro. El cólera, muriéndose la gente en Cuba, sabiéndose que hay cólera, Salud Pública tomando medidas y la prensa no dice nada, y *Granma* te sale con un artículo diciéndote que hay que cuidarse porque hay una enfermedad, el Síndrome de Diarreas Agudas que está afectando a la gente. Mejor dile a la gente la verdad, que es cólera, para que la gente se cuide. Es que le tienen miedo a eso. Un guajiro de Pinar del Río o de Santiago de Cuba, si se lee el periódico, no entiende qué es el Síndrome de Diarreas Agudas.

Sara: Eso es el uso de eufemismos.

RB15: En la prensa está establecido así. ¿Qué es lo que pasa? El Comité Central del Partido controla la prensa. Es su tarea. Hay un departamento que es para eso. A los blogueros no nos pasa eso.

Sara: En teoría no controlan la prensa, la orientan...

RB15: En teoría y en práctica también. En Cuba, es prioridad número uno. Desde efemérides hasta eventos. Cosas que recalquen siempre la obra de la Revolución (que es muy grande y hay que reconocerla), los logros de los amigos y que recalquen lo malo de los enemigos, como Estados Unidos, Reino Unido, es decir, los países capitalistas. Ellos son los malos, y si son malos hay que volverlos más malos todavía mediáticamente.

Sara: ¿Eso es lo que prima en la agenda mediática? Bueno, esa diferenciación entre ‘nosotros y ellos’ también se da en otros países.

RB15: Sin discusión ninguna. El problema es que los contextos son diferentes. Hay un dicho que dice: aquí, si quieres comer, bien siéntate a ver el noticiero. Te decía, con los blogueros no pasa, porque el Partido no ha podido organizar a los blogueros, ni los ha podido orientar, ni les ha podido decir. Puede que lo haya intentado. Hay orientaciones que se les han dado a periodistas que se hagan su blog. Eso se ha hecho. ¿Tú eres periodista? Si quieres tener Internet en tu casa, te exijo

que te abras un blog. A nosotros mismos nos llaman a muchos eventos nacionales para que compartamos nuestras experiencias. A mí me ha llamado el Partido para que cuente mis experiencias en la blogosfera a los periodistas del centro del país. Felicidades.

Ahora, yo creo que lo que yo hago está bien. En mi enfoque, amén de que me pueda equivocar, creo que no estoy haciendo nada malo. Creo, al contrario, que en Cuba hace falta mucha prensa crítica y poner a debate cosas. Por eso, yo creo en lo que hago. Ese puede ser mi aporte en la vida como bloguero, que es tratar de destapar verdades, poner las cosas en claro, tratar de condenar la manipulación mediática que hay contra Cuba, además, porque contra Cuba hay mucha manipulación mediática. Esto está jodido, pero no es el infierno tampoco como lo quieren hacer ver muchos medios [comentan sobre periódicos españoles]. Por ahí va a cosa. Nosotros tenemos ese papel. Yo me lo he creído, como nos lo hemos creído unos cuantos colegas. Esta es nuestra Sierra Maestra y nos toca hacer cambiar muchas visiones sobre fenómenos que históricamente han sido vistos como que... de eso no se habla. A mí me resulta, por ejemplo, muy interesante que tengo muchos lectores del blog que me dicen que, para informarme sobre Cuba, en la mañana abro *Cubadebate*, el *Nuevo Herald* y *La Chiringa de Cuba*. Mira tú: oficialismo, bloguismo y periodismo rancio. ¡Coño, qué bien que me tienen a mí como un balance!

Sara: ¿Te sientes cómodo con esa posición, en medio?

RB15: Sí, claro. El que me dice eso, me lo dice porque se lee lo que quieren las autoridades cubanas que se sepa sobre Cuba, el *Nuevo Herald* es lo que quieren las autoridades norteamericanas, o la mafia de Miami, que se sepa sobre Cuba, y yo digo lo que está pasando en Cuba. Lo que está bien, está bien; lo que está mal, está mal. Me gusta que me comparen por ahí.

Sara: Antes comentaste que escribes desde ‘dentro’ de la Revolución, pero de forma crítica. Yo me preguntaba, ¿qué significa ser revolucionario?

RB15: Te voy a hablar de mí. Vengo de una formación revolucionaria, comunista. Fui militante de la Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas hasta los 28 años. No lo seré del Partido, jamás, porque no creo en la forma en que se está trabajando en el Partido. No es que no crea en el Partido, es que no creo en la forma en que se está trabajando en el Partido. Mi partido, mi forma de llevar este país, se llama *LaChiringadeCuba.com*. Creo que yo resuelvo mucho más poniendo artículos, haciendo análisis y escribiendo como escribo desde mi blog que reunido una vez al mes en una habitación climatizada con cuarenta viejos que, además la mayoría no entiende las cosas como yo. Mi blog se llama se llama *LaChiringadeCuba.com*, y mi partido se llama se llama *LaChiringadeCuba.com*. ¿Qué es sentirse revolucionario? Primero, yo entiendo que, a pesar de que Cuba tiene muchos problemas, entiendo que vamos dando pasos de avance y que este es el camino. A mí no me gustaría que en Cuba haya capitalismo. Entiendo que, si seguimos al paso que vamos, o quizás un poco más acelerados, Cuba puede ser un magnífico país con su sistema socialista. Eso es bloguear desde adentro.

Sara: Pero no parece tan sencillo, especialmente si piensas en los blogueros de *La Joven Cuba*. No depende sólo de tu identidad, sino de lo que alguien interprete.

RB15: Ahora te voy a hacer un par de cuentos. Creo que sí es complicado. Es así como tú dices, pero la Revolución no es un funcionario. La Revolución somos todos. Fidel Castro, el líder máximo de nosotros, se ha equivocado y lo ha reconocido. Nosotros lo hemos reconocido y hemos seguido adelante, y para muchos es un ídolo. Debajo de él, ¿cuánta gente no se ha equivocado? Nosotros tenemos que luchar porque las veces que un funcionario, por conveniencia propia, o por digamos, un pensamiento octogenario, no entiende pues sencillamente que salga de su cargo, te vas porque no entiendes cómo viene esto. Yo no quiero

derrumbar la Revolución, yo quiero mejorarla. Este país es de los jóvenes. Siéntate y entiéndelo, aunque sea con un baberito y una cuchara, pero trágatelo. No podemos seguir anclados en hace cincuenta años atrás en cuanto a pensamiento. Por eso te decía, es complicado porque a veces eso te puede repercutir tanto económica como socialmente en tu vida, porque te sancione Partido. Te botan de tu centro de trabajo y entras en una especie de lista negra y te tienes que ir del país, porque coges una peste que no hay quien se te pare al lado. Es complicado, pero nosotros creemos que la Revolución somos todos, no un funcionario.

Sara: Y el hecho de que haya alguien juzgándote, que pueda poner en peligro tu medio de vida, ¿te condiciona en lo que dices?

RB15: Puede ser que lo intenten porque de hecho lo revisan constantemente, todo. Recientemente, yo no sé si te habrás enterado del tema del fraude masivo. Bueno, yo filtré esa información en Cuba, fui el primero, yo escribí un post sobre el tema y di un alerta al Ministerio de Educación de que las pruebas estaban filtradas, de que los muchachos tenían la prueba y que no era justo que aquél que tenía dinero para pagarla sacara una nota mejor, porque en Cuba es diferente, en Cuba es por escalafón. Al final repercute en que cojas una carrera, ah, por qué. Además, es que lo hicieron igual, es fraude, es dinero, es cosa fea. Escribo un post al instante, diciendo que tengo las pruebas, que no apliquen el examen. Ya tenía fecha. Yo lo publico como tres días antes. Llamé al Ministerio de Educación, y dijeron que eso era una patraña del imperialismo para desacreditar el sistema educativo cubano. Fui a la sede el MES (MAS), a 23 y F, y como yo, había muchos padres reclamando que sus hijos tenían la prueba, y que como ellos la tenían la tenían otros. Para no hacerte el cuento más largo, tres días después se aplican las pruebas y en efecto salen las pruebas que tenían los muchachos. A mí me la dio una fuente, pero la tenían muchos estudiantes en la calle, y por supuesto el resultado fue el esperado: Sale la Viceministra de Educación en *Juventud Rebelde* diciendo que los resultados de las pruebas ingreso habían sido tan buenos porque la educación en Cuba estaba tan buena... Aquello fue horrible. Escribí otro post diciéndole a la viceministra que no podían engañar al pueblo de esa manera, y mucho menos que utilizara una plataforma nacional como *Juventud Rebelde* para decir eso que llega a todos los rincones de este país, para que la gente crea que creas que la educación en Cuba es excelente. La educación en Cuba es una mierda, esa es la verdad. Es un desastre.

Te cuento que dos semanas después, debido a la presión que hicimos, se tuvo que retractar la viceministra, en una esquinita, en una sección, chiquitica. La viceministra se refería a no sé qué, no se refería exactamente a eso. Bueno, un desastre. Entonces cuando publico el examen, se hace hoy, y mañana yo publiqué: “Fraude masivo”, o “Sí hubo fraude”. Además, yo publico las tres fotos de los exámenes (esos exámenes llegan sellados por *Trasval* que se abren en el aula). Eso no hay forma de que tú le puedas tirar una foto. Siete horas más tarde publiqué los exámenes. Te dije que estaba la prueba en la calle y no me quisiste creer. Era una prueba irrefutable. Fue una bomba y me halaron las orejas, y me las volvieron a halar. A nivel de país. Claro, después de esto vino el *Nuevo Herald*, y todos los medios diciendo bloguero cubano denuncia fraude masivo en la educación, porque además la educación y la salud son temas muy delicados. Pero al que me cuestionó lo primero que le dije fue que no habían creído en mí. Le llamé por teléfono, y no creyeron en mí. Fui allí, y no creyeron en mí. ¿Qué tocaba? Desclasificación de archivos. De hecho, otros colegas han hecho otras cosas que han preocupado, pero no hay forma de controlarlo. Yo me siento identificado con la Revolución, y si hay un pitazo por los Cinco Héroes, yo voy, porque yo creo que tienen que venir para acá, yo creo que están luchando por una causa justa. Y si hay una actividad en el CDR me voy para allá. Pero lo que no puedes es decirme lo que yo no puedo publicar. Si quieres convivir conmigo, tenme cerca. Si no, vamos a fajarnos. Yo gozo de la suerte de que tengo muchos lectores.

Sara: ¿Qué le dirías al periodista en *Juventud Rebelde* y tiene que publicar la nota de la viceministra de Educación?

RB15: Mira, yo hace rato no colaboro con un medio nacional, más que nada, o más que todo, para no sentirme mal conmigo mismo. Yo no puedo escribir algo que no siento, ni puedo prestarme a ese juego. He tenido propuestas de trabajo en muchos medios nacionales y las he declinado. Yo no puedo hacer ese tipo de periodismo. Por eso me siento tan orgulloso de ser bloguero, que hay veces publico y después, releendo el texto he visto incongruencias. Claro, también lo hago en horario laboral. Hay veces que no encuentro la palabra, o disparates que se me han ido, pero en un medio eso no va a pasar. Pero prefiero equivocarme yo y que la gente se ría de mí antes de que lo hagan por cualquier cosa de esas.

Sara: ¿Cuáles son para ti los principales problemas que tiene la prensa cubana, y cómo podrían solucionarse?

RB15: Yo creo que la mejor virtud que tiene la prensa cubana es la calidad profesional de sus periodistas. Yo creo que el principal problema en Cuba no son los periodistas, sino el sistema que regula y organiza la prensa. Creo que esa es la mayor virtud. No te puedo hablar de ninguna otra virtud que no sea esa. Yo creo que lo que más le hace falta es ese espíritu que debe tener la prensa, que se ha perdido. Yo creo que la prensa en Cuba está viciada. Está demostrado porque los mismos periodistas que publican en *Cubadebate*, en *Granma*, en *Juventud Rebelde*, publican en *OnCuba*, en *Progreso Semanal*, en *Cuba Contemporánea* o es sus blogs personales y hacen un periodismo maravillo. Tú dices, ¿cómo puede ser capaz? Este hombre me acaba de hacer una nota de la efemérides que pasó en 1858, que eso no hay quien se lo lea, y te hace luego un reportaje... Eso te da la medida que el profesional de prensa cubana está muy bien preparado. Los profesores de la Facultad de Comunicación son estrellas. Lo que hay es mucho vicio en la profesión, mucho acomodamiento. Voy a escribir esto, porque si escribo lo otro sé que no me lo van a aceptar. Cuando uno se gradúa uno empieza muy explosivo y con mucha iniciativa. Vas y se lo mandas al editor, y el editor te dice que no, reescríbelo. Y cuando tú le mandas eso al editor cuatro veces en un día, y te vuelve a pasar mañana, y te vuelve a pasar otro día después... Sencillamente lo mandas al carajo, y dices: voy a escribir la misma mierda que todo el mundo, me voy a concentrar en mis proyectos personales, en revisar mi correo en Internet, en aprovechar del aire acondicionado y en irme para mi casa. Y en que me inviten a coberturas a comer bastante, porque a los periodistas cubanos les gusta comer bastante. Si tú quieres que te hagan una buena cobertura, invítalos con bastante comida. Si los invitas a una conferencia de prensa y no les das comida, no vienen más. “Conferencia de prensa porque Paquito el cojo se rompió un pie”, para allá que van todos [extiende el ejemplo].

Sara: Me hablabas de manipulación, ¿qué más?

RB15: Desinformación. Creo que la desinformación puede llegar a ser mentira. Yo creo que desinformar al pueblo es mentir al pueblo, es ocultarle realidades que existen. La falta, digamos, de enfoques críticos, es decir, una prensa crítica con dos hojas de *Granma* una vez a la semana, con opiniones de la población, no da nada. Creo que tiene que ser mucho más agresiva en cuanto a fenómenos que se dan diario, cosas que a la gente le gustaría saber. No hay mucho periodismo investigativo, que es una cosa que me encanta, y sobre todo es muy lineal. Los noticieros en Cuba y los periódicos en Cuba varían, a mi entender, un treinta por ciento diario, vamos a ponerle un 45%. El otro 55% por ciento es lo mismo que el año pasado, la misma efeméride, la misma recordación, todo.

Sara: Me llamaban la atención antes todas las conmemoraciones que se publican.

RB15: Es muy difícil. Creo que la mayor crítica que yo le podría hacer a la prensa cubana es que es muy romántica. Todo es muy lindo, todo es precioso, todo se puede resolver, todo está ahí al alcance de la mano. [Comentan sobre Eduardo del Llano y su blog].

Sara: Desde los ochenta ha habido constantes referencias críticas al papel disfuncional de la prensa, críticas al triunfalismo, a los vacíos informativos, una voluntad política aparente. Entonces, ¿por qué crees que la prensa no ha cambiado en la práctica?

RB15: Raúl lo ha dicho, lo ha dicho Díaz-Canel. Mira, eso no se lo explica nadie. Creo, en mi opinión particular, que viene del aparato que rige la prensa. Es el Partido. Mira, hace unos meses sucedió algo muy interesante. Díaz-Canel hablando, que es un tipo super chévere, dándole visión a la gente. Él fue el que rescató a *La Joven Cuba*, él fue hasta la *Universidad de Matanzas*. Eso te da la idea de que voluntad de país sí la hay. Lo que pasa es que los estratos están tan intrínsecamente atados a esa visión antigua que es lo que te decía ahorita, es demasiado fuerte. Te voy a decir una opinión muy personal: si a los blogueros alguien nos tiene miedo en Cuba no es el Partido, el Partido sabe cómo lidiar con nosotros. Son los jefes que están abajo, los jefes de las empresas, la administración.

¿Sabes por qué? Porque tienen miedo a que nosotros podamos poner en peligro sus beneficios: su celular, su tarjeta de gasolina, su carro. Yo, jefe de esta empresa, no quiero que Sara García sea bloguera en mi empresa, porque el día de mañana escribe algo que a mi jefe le molesta, y el día de mañana me sancionan. Creo que va más por ahí que por la voluntad de país. Creo que esa sí existe. A nivel de país, los que controlan la prensa, piensan igual que como hace cincuenta años. Tiene que haber una persona ahí que diga se acabó, se acabó, el pueblo lo está pidiendo a gritos.

Sara: ¿Crees que Julio García Luis era esa persona?

RB15: Julio García Luis era la persona, y por ser precisamente como era le pasó lo que le pasó [señala el móvil que está grabando]. En el mundo de la comunicación, Julito era muy querido. Julito era persona que hacía las crónicas de los viajes de Fidel, un Dios con la pluma de la mano. En el mundo de la comunicación, Julio es una personalidad muy respetada y muy citada, sobre todo cuando vas a dar un paso más allá. En ese paso más allá, siempre va a estar Julio. Todavía tienes que ver esas personas que todavía están ahí, dirigiendo la prensa.

Sara: Estaba leyendo el libro de Julio y él explica cómo el mundo de la cultura ha ido mucho más avanzado que el de la prensa, cómo el mundo de la cultura ha tenido personalidades visibles que han empujado los límites, pero éstos no han tenido la misma visibilidad en el periodismo.

RB15: ¿Sabes qué pasa? Julio puede que haya sido esa figura pero, ¿dónde iba a publicar Julio? No había blogosfera en ese momento. Si Julito hubiese tenido un blog ahora, quizás hubiera sido uno de los más visitados en Cuba. Pero si no lo hacía en un medio oficial, ¿dónde lo iba a publicar? En una tesis.

Sara: Has dicho algo clave, la visión del papel del periodismo, del debate, de la crítica. ¿Crees que esa puede ser la clave?

RB15: Esa es la clave, es decir, a ver... Me has hecho una entrevista muy complicada. La Iglesia, hace muchos años atrás, estaba en contra de alfabetizar la gente, de darle cultura. ¿Por qué? Porque a medida que alfabetizas a la gente, no puedes alfabetizarlos. En un país, si no te conviene que la gente haga una cosa u otra, o que se te vayan las cosas de la mano, no te conviene darles espacios de debate, ni te conviene ponerles herramientas en la mano que revienten todo eso.

Sara: Pero eso no debería pasar en una sociedad socialista...

RB15: Ni democrática, ni revolucionaria. Está contra cualquier principio. Aquí estamos, y no pasa nada. ¿Complicado, eh? Complicado.

Sara: ¿Qué futuro ves el último Congreso de la UPEC? Se habla de una ley de comunicación, de una ley de prensa...

RB15: Los ánimos están bien, hasta los blogueros estábamos atentos.

Sara: ¿Qué empezó a dar esos ánimos?

RB15: Creo que el discurso de Raúl, los llamados que ha hecho para tener una prensa más crítica. Después, Díaz-Canel que se ha metido de lleno. De hecho, presidió el Congreso de la UPEC. Creo que los propios profesionales de la prensa se han lanzado en plumas diciendo que este no es el periodismo que necesitan, que quieren escribir algo más y ese fue el impulso para lograr un congreso como este. Creo que el presidente que tiene no es la persona adecuada. Primero, por la edad que tiene; segundo, por la visión que tiene, y tercero por la gestión que ha hecho. Díaz-Canel se ha metido, ha hecho algunas apariciones. Pero todavía, ¿qué sucede? No sé. Puedes hacer el Congreso, pero si no pones a la figura clave, si no cambias la estructura, seguimos igual. Mañana pueden decir que tenemos nueva ley de comunicación, pero seguimos igual.

Sara: ¿Crees que la ley es importante?

RB15: Sí. Creo que es importante. Creo que va a mejorar muchos problemas, no todos. En este país a los periodistas les es muy difícil hacer periodismo porque casi todo está prohibido. Casi todo está prohibido. Si yo ahora saco mi cámara y echo una foto aquí, lo más seguro es que me saquen a patadas. O si lo haces en una tiene, o en una escuela. No puedes decir, soy periodista, ¿me puedes responder a unas preguntas? Tienes que medir mil permisos. No puedes hacer muchas cosas. Eso con una ley de prensa se va a resolver.

Sara: ¿Cómo explicas que países con leyes progresistas no puedan ponerlas en práctica de forma eficaz?

RB15: México o Colombia son entornos muy complicados por la violencia. Creo que en Cuba nunca va a pasar eso, por suerte. Una ley, lo más importante que solucionaría, es romper las barreras que hoy tenemos, los accesos. Me tienes que dar la información porque te la estoy pidiendo.

Sara: Pero eso en teoría se ha dicho por las personalidades políticas...

RB15: Aquí lo que se decía, y era una ley, era lo que decía Fidel Castro. Después de él, eso no va a pasar más ya. Él tenía mucho respeto.

Sara: Por eso hay un período de reinstitucionalización.

RB15: En parte, y ojalá llegara a la prensa.

Sara: ¿Qué te parece esta idea de ‘Actualizar’ la prensa?

RB15: Si una cosa pudiera ayudar al país, tanto económica como socialmente hablando, sería una prensa como Dios manda. Mira, yo te voy a hablar claro, te voy a ser sincero. Yo me siento, y como yo hay unos cuantos colegas, yo me siento beneficiado del mal trabajo de la prensa. El que está afuera, incluso el que no tiene Internet, me manda un correo y me pide que lo suscriba al blog. A mí me beneficia el mal trabajo de la prensa. La gente quiere saber cómo piensa el cubano. A mí, como ciudadano, me gustaría ver lo que pienso en el *Granma*, publicado por el mejor periodista de *Granma*. Si *Granma* publicara lo que se publica en un blog... La diferencia es el medio. *Granma*, *Juventud Rebelde* y *Trabajadores* llegan a todos los rincones de este país. El 80% de Cuba no tiene acceso a Internet. Ese es el periodismo que quiero, el que pueda llegar a todos. Que te identifiquen

como columnista. Muchas veces me han dicho que hubiesen querido leer mi post en el *Granma*, o en cualquier otro medio nacional. Lo que más jode a uno es ver a ese periodista que conoces personalmente, que escribe maravillosamente en su blog personal, y leerlo en el *Granma*. Eso es frustrante.

Los que me leen son algunos cubanos que tienen acceso a Internet, y después gente en España y en Estados Unidos. Yo quiero que mi blog lo lea mi suegra, que lo lean en el monte en Pinar del Río... Si la blogosfera hace un periódico nacional, nadie más lee *Granma*. Te aseguro que en seis meses nadie lee *Granma*. Sin hacer oda de que somos los mejores, sencillamente, por los enfoques. Escribamos mejor o peor que los periodistas. Si un bloguero puede o no hacerlo es otra cosa, es darle a la gente lo que la gente quiere.

RC16

Editor at *Juventud Rebelde*

Havana, 4 July 2014

Sara: ¿Cuáles son las principales virtudes y desafíos del periodismo cubano?

RC16: Creo que una primera virtud es el carácter social de los medios de comunicación. Nosotros estamos tratando también de resolver un conflicto que eso ha creado, porque hemos tenido confusión en Cuba sobre el carácter social de los medios de producción y el carácter estatal. En realidad, lo que hemos tenido esencialmente es una prensa de propiedad estatal. Eso ha tenido una ventaja en el caso de Cuba, que algunos no entienden fuera porque es difícil entender un país como Cuba donde ha habido una Revolución. En los primeros años de la Revolución, eso era una ventaja indudable porque se producía una confluencia entre los intereses del Estado y los intereses de los medios.

Recuerda que, en Cuba, cuando triunfó la Revolución en 1959, había un sistema de medios privados, burgueses, que respondía esencialmente a las élites dominantes en este país. Y por lo tanto, el Estado que surge como resultado de la Revolución es un Estado que está representando los intereses populares. Y la prensa que nace también emerge como resultado de esa Revolución. Estaba representando el ansia de cambiar la estructura dependiente que tenía Cuba por un nuevo país, un país independiente, soberano, y con justicia social. Por lo tanto, yo diría que en los primeros años de la Revolución ese conflicto que ya se está visualizando un poquito mejor, entre el carácter social de los medios y el carácter estatal de los medios, en un primer momento no era tan visible porque era más fácil que confluyeran los intereses profesionales y editoriales de los medios con los intereses de ese nuevo Estado que estaba surgiendo con la Revolución.

Pero lógicamente, con el tiempo, la Revolución ha ido generando sus propias contradicciones, sus propios conflictos al interior. Y ya creo que estamos lo suficiente maduros para entender que el nuevo modelo de prensa que tenemos que proponernos como parte de la 'Actualización' es que, como mismo está ocurriendo en la vida económica donde se está produciendo una separación entre las funciones estatales y las funciones empresariales, creo que a escala de los medios también tiene que producirse una separación entre el Estado, que tiene unas funciones, una naturaleza, unos objetivos, y los medios, que deben también tener su naturaleza y sus funciones mejor definidas.

Nosotros creo que, en el último congreso de la Unión de Periodistas, una de las cosas que hablábamos, es sobre el propio conflicto que ha vivido Cuba frente a Estados Unidos; el interés de Estados Unidos de subvertir el orden constitucional e institucional que tiene Cuba. Los medios han formado parte del sistema de control político de la sociedad.

Una sociedad, no sólo la cubana sino cualquiera, tiene distintas formas de control: tiene el control político, el jurisdiccional, el control institucional y tiene el control popular. Y nosotros estamos defendiendo la idea de que el sistema de prensa de la Revolución tiene que formar parte del control popular y no del político. Porque, además, nuestra constitución establece que el soberano es el pueblo y, por lo tanto, se supone que si la prensa es de propiedad social quien tiene que representar la prensa, los intereses que tiene que defender, son los intereses de la gente. Eso no quiere decir que en Cuba se produzca un conflicto insalvable entre los intereses del Estado y los intereses de la gente, pero no caben dudas de que se producen conflictos. La prensa tiene que representar los

intereses populares. Esa es una idea que hemos estado defendiendo en los últimos tiempos, sobre todo durante el proceso de 'Actualización', y la necesidad de transformar el modelo de comunicación y de prensa del país.

Es una virtud y es un defecto que está corrigiéndose. Es un desafío que, al menos en la forma en que se ha planteado en los congresos y en los análisis que se están haciendo para transformar el modelo de comunicación y de prensa en el país, se aprecia que hay intención de eso [de corregirlo]. Nosotros, incluso hemos dicho que eso es mucho más importante en el sistema socialista, sobre todo en una experiencia como la nuestra donde tienes un partido único, tienes un sistema institucional y tienes un sistema de instituciones democráticas, y tienes un único partido. Tú, para garantizar un verdadero contrapeso en una sociedad de partido único, necesitas tener en primer lugar un sistema de poder popular.

Cuba tiene un sistema de gobierno al que llamamos poder popular. Tenemos que lograr que ese sistema de poder popular adquiera su verdadera naturaleza, la naturaleza para la que fue creada. Eso, por un lugar y por el otro, que el sistema de comunicación, que el sistema de prensa, también formen parte de los contrapesos del sistema político, porque en una sociedad de partido único se puede ir creando una sensación de que todo tiene que ser muy homogéneo, de que todo el mundo tiene que coincidir. Creo que nosotros [¿los ciudadanos? ¿Los periodistas?] tenemos la suficiente madurez como para entender que los propósitos generales son comunes.

¿A qué aspira Cuba? Cuba aspira a defender la independencia nacional y la justicia social. Y eso comprende que el Estado y la prensa no puedan tener el mismo camino. Ahora, ¿cómo se defiende eso, con qué ideas, con qué medidas, con qué proyectos? Ya ahí pueden producirse puntos de vista diferentes. Por lo tanto tiene que haber contrapeso, tiene que haber debate, tiene que haber contraposición de ideas, y el sistema de prensa tiene que formar parte del control popular. Porque además, si estudias las sociedades de partido único (la experiencia más concreta la tenemos en la Unión Soviética, en Europa del Este) te das cuenta de que tienden a crear a veces un tipo de subordinación de abajo hacia arriba; se tiende a respetar mucho lo que se decide arriba, y entonces nosotros tenemos que lograr que el sistema institucional de la Revolución garantice la horizontalidad de las decisiones para que, si un día cuando ya no esté la generación histórica de la Revolución a alguien en Cuba se le ocurre tomar una decisión que afecte los dos propósitos esenciales (la independencia nacional y la justicia social en las que la revolución fundó) la sociedad esté en condiciones de oponerse a eso, tenga contrapeso, tenga capacidad de reaccionar y no pase como pasó en la Unión Soviética, donde alguien decidió y se cayó como un castillo.

Es una cuestión de supervivencia del sistema político cubano garantizar que los medios de comunicación y los medios de prensa formen parte del mecanismo de control popular, porque uno de los problemas que ha tenido el sistema de medios de la Revolución es que ha sido un sistema que ha tenido una gran dependencia institucional. Hemos estado defendiendo en los últimos tiempos que tenemos que saltar de un modelo de dependencia institucional a un modelo de independencia institucional, que los medios tengan la suficiente autonomía y la suficiente capacidad para poder ejercer sus funciones sin las mediaciones de agentes externos, o con la menor cantidad de mediaciones (porque las mediaciones existen en cualquier sistema, existen en el sistema español, en el sistema de medios de los EEUU...). Ya sabemos que los dueños de los medios deciden, pero por lo menos nosotros tenemos la ventaja de que podemos discutir estas cosas, porque el último congreso de la UPEC fue un momento importante, donde la dirección de la Revolución vio a los periodistas hablar esto con total transparencia y con total franqueza. Por supuesto, esto no va a ocurrir de la noche a la mañana, pero tenemos la esperanza de que el cambio ocurra, porque la lógica es que el país necesita esos cambios.

Sara: Mirando atrás en la historia, uno se da cuenta de que las demandas actuales de los periodistas cubanos no son nuevas. Desde el 86 hasta hoy en día, ¿por qué todo ha quedado en los debates y no se ha materializado en cambios concretos en el sistema medios y en la práctica periodística?

RC16: Creo que la clave de eso está en las condiciones que ha vivido el país. No se puede olvidar que en el año '89 se cae el socialismo, y la caída del socialismo para Cuba fue un golpe demoledor. Este fue un país que perdió el 80% del comercio, fue un país que se quedó sin combustible para funcionar (se habló incluso de crear planes para que el país viviera con cero combustibles), la gente vivió en las peores condiciones y, en medio de esa situación, era muy difícil hacer un cambio en las concepciones políticas. En ese momento, lo que ocurrió fue un cambio en las concepciones económicas. Fue el primer momento en que se planteó una reforma del sistema económico. Es la primera vez que comienza a hablarse en Cuba de inversiones extranjeras, de la despenalización del dólar, empiezan a adoptarse una serie de decisiones que, mientras Cuba tuvo una relación ventajosa con la Unión Soviética y el campo socialista, el país no había tenido necesidad de acudir a ellas.

Ya en ese momento lo que se plantea, por una cuestión de supervivencia, es sacar la economía a flote. Es muy difícil que en ese momento se produjera un debate que llegara al ámbito político, porque la prioridad era la economía. Y hoy estamos en la misma encrucijada, porque lo cierto es que aquella reforma económica en un momento se frena. La economía comienza a emerger, y ha habido resistencia en un sector importante del Partido, del estado y de la dirección de la Revolución a cambios que, a un sector importante de los que dirigen el país, les puede parecer que apunta al capitalismo. Por lo tanto, en los años 2000 la reforma se para y comienza como un regreso a la prevalencia de la tendencia de que el estado es el que lo impulse todo. Eso, por supuesto, nos condujo a la situación de hoy.

Estamos de nuevo frente al dilema de levantar la economía con una conciencia más clara de que tenemos que deshacernos de los dogmas. El mundo es como es y Cuba no puede aferrarse a los viejos idealismos, porque los errores que se cometieron fueron brillantes, aquella idea de que el estado podía resolver los problemas de la gente, de que, si el estado tenía más control de la economía y de prácticamente toda la sociedad, eso iba a ser mejor para todo el mundo, para la economía... Pero evidentemente, hay que reconciliarse con la idea marxista de que hay un período de transición y que en la transición necesitas cosas que vienen del capitalismo: no puedes renunciar al mercado, no puedes renunciar a la pequeña propiedad.

Como resultado del idealismo, la dirección política de la Revolución cometió errores determinados. Ahora estamos en un momento en el que se está planteando un nuevo modelo económico que, por supuesto, va a tener repercusiones a otras escalas políticas, sociales, con consecuencias que no van a ser agradables. Por ejemplo, la Revolución creó un sistema de igualdad social que en algunas condiciones llegó a ser igualitaria. Tienes una sociedad hoy en Cuba que está muy estratificada desde el punto de vista social. Algunos sectores que tienen más ingresos, que pueden tener sus millones de pesos, sectores muy pobres y, sin embargo, todos esos sectores reciben atención médica universal gratuita, educación gratuita, desde que nacen hasta la universidad, la libreta de abastecimiento que todavía se garantiza (aunque es casi simbólica, pero de todas maneras ayuda a los sectores más pobres del país). Pero esa canasta básica la reciben tanto los sectores más pobres como la gente que tienen unos ingresos que ya le permiten vivir cómodamente.

Todas esas son cosas que arrastramos de lo que fueron los grandes idealismos de la Revolución y que ahora hay que resolverlos, y en algunos casos tendrá un costo social. Lo más difícil. Por eso, en Cuba las cosas se demoran un poco más en cambiar, porque siempre está la amenaza de los costos de las decisiones políticas y el hecho de que el cambio no se produce en condiciones ideales. El cambio se produce con una política acrecentada por parte de los EE.UU., ahora más sutil, de tratar de subvertir el orden en Cuba. Lo último es el escándalo con el banco francés, el famoso escándalo con la red *Zunzuneo*... Hay una política de tratar de subvertir el orden en Cuba que no permite que

los cambios se hagan en condiciones ideales. Siempre se hacen en condiciones muy difíciles y con amenazas muy grandes. Todo eso condiciona también la naturaleza de los cambios y condiciona la velocidad de los cambios, condiciona las dos cosas.

Creo que otra ventaja que tiene el sistema de prensa es la formación profesional. Nosotros tenemos escuelas de periodismo que forman a los profesionales en una relación con nuestro sistema de prensa, que tal vez no tiene parecidos con otros sistemas en el mundo. El estudiante de periodismo en Cuba está en constante relación con los medios de comunicación, y eso le permite, por un lado, tener la visión crítica, cuestionadora, que le ofrece la academia, y por el otro, conocer la realidad de cómo funcionan los medios. Creo que eso les permite madurar en la idea de cuál es el tipo de periodismo que debería hacer, porque están todo el tiempo nutriéndose de las dos realidades: la realidad de los medios y la realidad de lo que se les ofrece.

En general, los jóvenes son más impetuosos, son más dispuestos al cambio, tienen más energía para empezar el cambio, están menos dispuestos de aferrarse a las viejas formas, a las maneras antiguas. Creo que parte de las cosas que están revolucionando los medios de comunicación y las formas de ejercer el periodismo está liderado por los jóvenes. Ahí es donde se va generar el cambio de modelo de comunicación que requiere el país. De hecho, ellos están alimentando con sus maneras de hacer, y con sus maneras de actuar, lo mismo con lo que hacen en los medios tradicionales que con lo que hacen en sus blogs, en su *Facebook*, en su *Twitter*... O sea, en ellos se está manifestando la expresión del cambio, ellos son los adelantados del cambio. Son una generación que nació en una época de cambio para el país, pero además, ellos como jóvenes son los que están más dispuestos a impulsar y a no someterse a las viejas formas, a las viejas maneras de hacer. Esa es una ventaja que tiene el sistema de comunicación del país. Las tesis son muy revolucionarias, muy valientes, muy críticas.

A pesar de que la sociedad cubana tiene fama de ser una sociedad cerrada, en la que hay poco debate, en realidad hay un gran debate a nivel de toda la sociedad, y en las universidades se debate con total libertad. Las tesis de los estudiantes, por lo general, están basadas en análisis muy críticos del funcionamiento de los medios, haciendo proposiciones de cómo cambiar los medios, y creo que eso es una ventaja. Una ventaja es que tenemos unas universidades, un sector académico, que le permite al sistema de medios del país contar con herramientas teóricas para poder emprender sólidamente cualquier transformación. Ahora mismo, de este periódico se hicieron cuatro tesis: una sobre el abordaje que estamos haciendo de los lineamientos, una sobre una sección que tenemos sobre sexualidad, y dos estudiantes que hicieron una experiencia nueva que comenzamos este año que se llama ‘estudiantes insertados’, que consiste en que vienen y se insertan en el medio, trabajan, hacen un proyecto periodístico dentro del medio, y hacen un análisis además desde su experiencia dentro del medio sobre qué debería cambiar. Todo eso es muy importante. Por ejemplo, tuvimos una que todo el abordaje que hizo fue sobre la constitucionalidad, el derecho y el periodismo cubano. Importantísimo, a veces un poco olvidado, no sólo en el periodismo cubano, sino en todo el mundo. De hecho, vienen en septiembre para nuestro periódico y tenemos interés en que sigan abordando esos temas con profundidad.

Sara: A partir del ‘86 se abren muchos debates que se quedan en círculos más profesionales y que no se materializan en un debate público general. ¿Cómo está siendo el debate sobre la ‘Actualización del Modelo Económico’?

RC16: Creo que ahora sí se ha producido un gran debate público. Raúl mismo ha sido bastante crítico sobre el papel de los medios, sobre todo en la Conferencia del Partido. La sociedad cubana está tratando de superar una crisis estructural. El problema que tiene la sociedad cubana es un problema estructural de su economía, y una de las cosas que se defendieron en el congreso de la UPEC es que el periodismo cubano está viviendo también una crisis estructural, y una crisis estructural que tiene también distintas dimensiones. Además, que no hay que tenerle miedo a la

palabra crisis, porque la crisis no es sinónimo de desastre, de que se acabó todo. La crisis la estamos viendo como una oportunidad para corregir el problema estructural del periodismo cubano.

Esa crisis estructural del periodismo cubano tiene varias dimensiones: tiene una dimensión económica, que es cómo se expresa esa crisis en la economía de los medios. En general, nosotros hemos tenido un sistema de medios que vive del presupuesto del estado. No por maldad, sino por idealismo, por la empresa privada, tratando de alejarse de la publicidad y de todo eso que ha condicionado el periodismo en todos los países, y que en Cuba lo condicionó durante más de cincuenta años de experiencia capitalista. Entonces, el sistema de medios que creó la Revolución cubana trató de romper con todo eso creando una prensa de propiedad social y estatal que tuviera el presupuesto del estado y que no requiriera de todas esas cosas malvadas.

Creo que todo eso se está repensando ahora. Hay cosas que son como funcionan en el mundo, aunque quieras hacerlas diferentes. Entonces, hay que revisar la dependencia económica que tienen los medios del presupuesto del estado, y esa crisis estructural de los medios que afecta el funcionamiento de los medios. Los medios dependen del presupuesto de estado, un estado que, además, era casi el que controlaba toda la economía. Bueno, todo eso generó el problema que tenemos hoy.

Primero, está ocurriendo un proceso de separación de las funciones estatales y empresariales. Las empresas no pueden estar bajo el tutelaje estatal, tienen que tener una independencia, tienen que tener una autonomía, una libertad de acción, para que puedan funcionar, oxigenarse y salir de la situación que tiene el sistema empresarial del país. Y los medios también tienen que encontrar formas de sustentarse económicamente, incluyendo la publicidad. Nosotros tenemos una experiencia de uso de la publicidad que tiene más de diez años, y eso no nos ha generado ningún conflicto ético. En realidad, nos ha resuelto grandes problemas económicos, porque si usted separa adecuadamente la parte publicitaria de la parte periodística, como lo hemos hecho, no tiene por qué contaminarse. Puedes mantener la debida distancia con el mundo empresarial y, a la vez obtener, las ventajas económicas que te ofrecería tener la publicidad, y puede haber otras formas. Los medios tienen que encontrar forma de ingresar dinero y que eso, a la vez que favorezca la modernización de los medios, favorezca también las condiciones de vida de los periodistas: que tengan mejores ingresos, que estén mejor pagados. Porque la crisis estructural incluye que los periodistas no están bien pagados y, entonces, tengo periodistas trabajando en el pluriempleo. Tenemos que lograr que la gente no sienta que tiene que pluriemplearse para poder sobrevivir. Esa es una dimensión de la crisis es la económica.

La otra dimensión es la de la credibilidad. En las dimensiones de Cuba, de acoso de los EEUU, de intento de los Estados Unidos de crear medios que sustituyan al sistema de medios cubanos. Por eso es que critican tanto el sistema de medios del país. Es decir, todo el esfuerzo que ha hecho EE.UU. por crear medios alternativos que intenten destruir la Revolución. El sistema de medios de la Revolución necesita tener el máximo de credibilidad, y esa credibilidad ha sufrido en los últimos tiempos.

Después, en el debate nacional que se hizo para el Congreso del Partido, por primera vez un sector de nuestra gente empezó a decir que los medios cubanos no dicen toda la verdad. Por primera vez aparece ese mal síntoma, empieza a resentirse el altísimo grado de credibilidad con que habían contado los medios de comunicación de la Revolución en todos estos años. Eso ocurre, además, en un escenario mucho más complejo. Un escenario en el que como resultado de la revolución tecnológica y del desarrollo de las nuevas tecnologías asociadas a la informática y a las comunicaciones, los medios de la Revolución han perdido la hegemonía y la influencia. O sea, antes prácticamente la información que recibía el pueblo de Cuba era la que le daban los medios cubanos, y la otra era la que llegaba por Radio Martí. Pero ahora, la gente está sometida a una multiplicidad de influencias: tienen Internet, las memorias flash, todo lo que han generado las

nuevas tecnologías. Hemos perdido la hegemonía, y lo único que nos garantiza poder influir sobre la gente como lo necesita el país para defender el proyecto de país que queremos es teniendo credibilidad. Eso es único que nos garantiza tener influencia. Que la gente siga creyendo que estos son los medios en los que puede confiar, que son los que representan sus intereses.

Ese es un problema que tenemos que resolver, y para resolverlo tenemos que tener menos dependencia institucional y tener más libertad y más autonomía para poder criticar las decisiones erróneas que se adoptan por cualquier instancia del país, el gobierno, quien sea que tome una mala decisión que afecte a la gente. Que los medios tengan la suficiente autonomía para abordarlo.

Otra expresión de la crisis estructural es una crisis con la política. ¿Cómo se observa eso? En Cuba no hay una ley de prensa, no hay una ley de comunicación. Está la Constitución, pero a lo largo de estos años no ha habido una ley que exprese ese carácter que está en la Constitución. Hemos tenido un documento del Buró Político que plantea o establece el marco legal, o el marco regulatorio esencial, del funcionamiento de los medios en el país. Ahora, ese documento del Buró Político ha tenido diversas interpretaciones a diversas escalas de la sociedad, incluyendo dentro del propio Partido y en otras instancias. No es la misma forma en que observan esas decisiones del Buró Político un dirigente del Partido de aquí del Comité Central del Partido, que uno del Comité Provincial del Partido en Guantánamo, o el director de la Empresa Citrícola de Jagüey Grande. Cuando ese documento comienza a interpretarse a diversas escalas de la sociedad, comienza a tener diversas interpretaciones. Y entonces, como resultado de eso que ha sido una ventaja... Porque si te lees el documento es ideal.

Lo que plantea el documento es la necesidad de hacer periodismo de investigación, de contrastar las fuentes, del ejercicio del periodismo crítico... y da un margen. Es a lo que aspiraría cualquier profesional de la prensa. Lo que plantea teóricamente el documento del Buró Político es lo que aspiramos como profesionales revolucionarios de la prensa, pero el documento por sí solo no ha garantizado que se respeten las responsabilidades y los márgenes que le corresponden a la prensa en nuestra sociedad. Eso ha llevado a la idea de que tenemos una crisis jurisdiccional, y eso es lo que ha alimentado la idea, la concepción, de que debemos tener una ley de comunicación. Tenemos que resolver el problema jurisdiccional y hay que crear una ley de comunicación que defina claramente las responsabilidades, los deberes y las potestades de la prensa en las condiciones del periodismo cubano de la Revolución.

Otra expresión de la crisis estructural es una crisis de las formas. Como hemos tenido un periodismo tan dependiente institucionalmente, eso ha generado un lenguaje, un lenguaje a veces panfletario, muy institucionalizado, un lenguaje propagandístico. Necesitamos ir, rescatar las raíces, las tradiciones tan ricas que tuvo siempre el periodismo revolucionario cubano, empezando por José Martí. Cuba tiene una tradición periodística extraordinaria, desde Martí hasta Félix Varela, que fue un padre religioso que tuvo publicaciones. Hay una tradición en el periodismo revolucionario cubano que nosotros tenemos que rescatar y que no sólo incluía las formas, sino también la belleza en el estilo. No por gusto Martí es uno de los grandes escritores del mundo del siglo XIX, Pablo de la Torriente Brau... Tenemos una tradición muy rica en el ámbito del estilo que lamentablemente, como resultado de esta gran dependencia institucional y de las formas en que funciona esto en el país, han provocado que tengamos un periodismo más propagandístico. Ese es otro problema que tenemos que resolver.

El otro es la crisis del modelo de comunicación, que es muy dependiente desde el punto de vista institucional. Tenemos que saltar de ese modelo a uno de independencia institucional y de autoregulación. Julio García Luis lo dice en el libro. El libro te va a explicar lo que ha pasado con el periodismo cubano en la Revolución. La cuestión de la dependencia institucional, un modelo regulado... Yo agregué en una discusión la idea de que tenemos que pasar a un modelo de confrontación de las mejores ideas revolucionarias. Ese es más o menos el escenario que tienes

ahora y es el escenario que se está estudiando para cambiar. Ese es el escenario que se discutió en el Congreso del Partido, en la Conferencia Nacional, en el último Congreso de la UPEC, y que ahora hay distintas comisiones tanto de la UPEC como de la dirección del país analizando para cambiar.

Sara: Me surgen dos dudas. La primera, ¿hacia dónde mira Cuba? ¿Qué se está estudiando como modelo comunicativo?

RC16: Creo que hay que estudiar las mejores experiencias de la izquierda. Creo que hay que estudiar lo que se hizo en la constitución ecuatoriana. Hay que estudiar todo lo que se ha hecho en el mundo y estudiar lo que se ha hecho en Cuba, porque la Revolución cubana tiene una experiencia en la creación de un modelo de comunicación. Fíjate, los mambises..., Martí crea el periódico Patria y, si te lees lo que Martí piensa que debe ser la prensa, las concepciones de Martí sobre la prensa, ya ahí tienes abierta parte de la concepción de lo que debería ser el modelo del periodismo cubano de la Revolución. Creo que lo esencial debe ser hacia adentro, hacia las tradiciones, y vincular eso con las prácticas universales más importantes que han surgido en los últimos años. Creo que no podemos tenerle miedo a nada. No hay que creer que, porque estudias las experiencias de alguien, vas a ser como esa persona.

Como mismo, en la economía estamos estudiando cómo se está haciendo en Vietnam, en China, cómo se hace en Japón, en Estados Unidos.... Creo que el Che fue abanderado de que Cuba

tiene que estudiar lo mejor que está ocurriendo en el mundo, y eso adaptarlo a las condiciones de nuestro país. No puedes copiar mecánicamente nada, porque uno de los errores que cometió el socialismo fue la copia mecánica de los modelos económicos, políticos... El socialismo tiene que ser auténtico, tiene que responder a los intereses del país donde se construye y a los intereses del pueblo que lo sustenta, no puede ser algo ajeno.

Uno de los modelos que tuvo nuestro modelo de comunicación es que, de cierta manera, se permeó del modelo soviético. La estructura de las redacciones es la estructura de un modelo soviético. Nosotros tenemos que fundar nuestro propio modelo, un modelo que responda a las necesidades de nuestro país, a las características de nuestro país y que tenga como brújula lo que te decía al principio, que la prensa cubana sea o forme parte de los mecanismos de control popular. Una prensa de propiedad pública que responda a los intereses del control popular. La sociedad cubana toda necesita control popular. Esta es una revolución de la gente. Cuando Fidel dijo en 23 y 12, un 19, de abril que esta era la Revolución de los humildes, por los humildes y para los humildes, ahí había el principio que la Revolución cubana, si traiciona eso, se traiciona a ella misma. No podemos tener ni un sistema de gobierno, ni un sistema de prensa, ni un sistema político que responda a los intereses de las catas burocráticas. Tiene que responder al pueblo, a la gente. Ese es el horizonte que debe tener el modelo de comunicación: un modelo de propiedad pública que responda a los intereses populares.

Sara: La sensación que tengo es que a esos debates les falta todavía madurar. ¿Esos debates teóricos están teniendo consecuencias en la forma en que se practica el periodismo en *Juventud Rebelde*?

RC16: Creo que sí. De todas maneras, *Juventud Rebelde* a lo largo de su existencia ha tenido formas de hacer periodismo que a veces han roto con las prácticas profesionales de otros medios. Cuando en el periodismo cubano de la Revolución prácticamente no había periodismo de opinión, *Juventud Rebelde* tenía columnas de opinión; cuando prácticamente no había grandes reportajes interpretativos cuestionadores de la realidad del país, *Juventud Rebelde* tenía ese tipo de reportaje; cuando en el periodismo cubano prácticamente se había perdido el humorismo gráfico, en *Juventud Rebelde* había un equipo de humorismo gráfico; cuando en el periodismo cubano se había perdido la crónica como género, en *Juventud Rebelde* ha habido grandes cronistas como Manuel González

Bello, y te darás cuenta de que eran cronistas que estaban abordando la realidad del país. O sea, en *Juventud Rebelde*, durante mucho tiempo han sembrado los gérmenes de lo que debería ser el nuevo modelo cubano de prensa.

Ahora, eso ha tenido altas y bajas, y se ha tenido que hacer no pocas veces enfrentando la incomprensión de las estructuras políticas del país, de las estructuras gubernamentales, la falta de apoyo legal que tendríamos en una ley de prensa o de comunicación. Por lo tanto, creo que aunque hace falta que hagamos que se visualice más el cambio en trabajos que empiecen a abordar con más profundidad y amplitud los conflictos de la sociedad cubana, lo ideal es que nosotros logremos avanzar de manera integral hacia un cambio del modelo de comunicación. Que logremos avanzar hacia una ley de comunicación, que logremos avanzar hacia un modelo de gestión económica de los medios distinto. O sea, que logremos avanzar integralmente en el cambio de modelo de comunicación y que logremos en el modelo de comunicación lo que el país se ha propuesto para el modelo económico.

Nosotros nos hemos planteado con la ‘Actualización’ cambiar el modelo económico del país, y tenemos que hacer una nueva proyección del modelo comunicativo. De eso te puedo adelantar que, por ejemplo, antes de irme para China hace un mes, formé parte de un equipo de la Unión de Periodistas para hacer un experimento, un cambio de modelo de comunicación en distintos medios de comunicación del país: nacionales, territoriales y locales. Y posiblemente esa propuesta se discuta próximamente en el pleno de la Unión Nacional de Periodistas. El primer paso verdaderamente fuerte quizás sea este, porque mira, el debate sobre la prensa cubana y sus problemas, sus déficits, ha estado presente a lo largo de la Revolución y cada vez que ha ocurrido un congreso del Partido, o de la UPEC, se han producido algunos cambios. De pronto, los medios comienzan a ser más atrevidos, se tratan con más desenfado los problemas del país. De hecho, ahora ha ocurrido eso.

Ahora, el noticiero de televisión tiene un programa que se llama *Cuba Dice*. Algo que no tenían nuestros medios de comunicación, porque uno de los espacios más criticados han sido los espacios informativos. Esa es una señal de un cambio. *La Mesa Redonda* de la televisión también ha empezado a abordar los problemas del país. En el periódico *Granma* está la sección de *Cartas a la Dirección*, secciones de opinión que no las tenía. Hay señales de que está naciendo algo nuevo, pero eso no basta, porque si no nos proponemos un cambio que sea radical, que resuelva el problema estructural, daremos algunos pasitos, pero después volveremos atrás. Si el problema es estructural no lo resuelves con paliativos. Si el problema es estructural, tú lo resuelves con cambios estructurales que cambien la estructura del modelo. Nosotros hemos estado defendiendo que tenemos que defender los problemas que tiene la estructura del modelo para poder cambiarlo y saltar hacia un modelo nuevo, un modelo más revolucionario, un modelo más exitoso y un modelo más adecuado a las condiciones de la contemporaneidad y a las condiciones del desarrollo de las nuevas tecnologías de la informática y de las comunicaciones. No nos podemos conformar. Tenemos que desarrollarnos, tenemos que cambiar.

Sara: Sí, a nivel global hay una crisis del periodismo que también se manifiesta en el modelo cubano.

RC16: Yo me sorprendí ahora en China, visitamos varios medios de comunicación en China. En el socialismo hay muchas discusiones. Entonces, hay gente, dentro de la izquierda socialista, que critica el modelo chino: es un modelo con mucha corrupción, van hacia el capitalismo, que si autorizaron a los ricos, que si están destruyendo el medio ambiente. Pero cuando uno visita el país, y lo conoce y lo puede ver un poco más de cerca, uno se da cuenta que han hecho algo milagroso en treinta años. Entonces, se hubieran podido aferrar a los viejos dogmas, a las ideas de Mao Zedong, a la colectivización, a la Revolución Cultural... a todos los grandes idealismos de Mao Zedong y no hubieran podido convertirse en la segunda economía del mundo, ni tener la esperanza de poder ser

la primera economía del mundo en el 2050. Es un país que te asombra su desarrollo, su nivel de modernización, de bienestar que está viviendo ya una buena parte de la gente en China.

En China me encontré con grupos mediáticos que son unos monstruos, porque a pesar de haber creado grupos mediáticos que además de ser decenas de periódicos, revistas... son dueños de cadenas de hoteles, son conglomerados mediáticos, son dueños de cadenas de hoteles, de inmobiliarias, tienen sus drones. Son unos monstruos de conglomerados mediáticos. La gente dirá: - Eso está mal. Bueno, quizás para las condiciones de tu país, pero para las condiciones de ellos está bien porque, bueno, tú le puedes criticar al gobierno chino que la gente no tenga acceso a Internet, a *Facebook* y a *Twitter* porque eso tiene que ver con la libertad del ser humano y va un día y lo tienen. Imagino que, en la forma en que van madurando, el día que el gobierno se sienta más fuerte y sienta que eso ya no es un peligro, lo permitirán. Tienen unos medios fabulosos, súper desarrollados. Nosotros estuvimos en el centro de internet de la televisión de China y tiene un desarrollo económico maravilloso. Estuvimos en un conglomerado mediático de una provincia del centro de China y el desarrollo es fabuloso. Los sistemas digitales son chinos, las máquinas son chinas, todo el funcionamiento. Es una cosa asombrosa.

Sara: Entonces, ¿hay que mirar hacia China también?

RC16: Hay que mirar a China también, todo lo mejor que esté pasando en el mundo. Martí dijo: “Cree el aldeano vanidoso que el mundo entero es su aldea”. Martí dijo también “Patria es humanidad”. Tú tienes que estudiar también las mejores experiencias humanas, y esas mejores experiencias humanas incorporarlas sin borrar tu identidad, la naturaleza espiritual de tu país, la naturaleza física de tu país, pero tienes que incorporar lo mejor del mundo, estudiar lo mejor del mundo, y si hay que mandar los muchachos a las mejores universidades del mundo para que aprendan y se preparen, también hay que hacerlo. Lo que no puedes hacer es quedarte anclado en el pasado, porque los que se quedan anclados en el pasado no triunfan. Y modernizarte, y adaptarte al mundo en el que vives para tener un modelo exitoso. De eso se trata.

Sara: Me comentó RB12 que al principio de los lineamientos se creó una comisión para monitorear todo lo que se publicaba en los medios, ¿Cómo funciona eso? ¿Todavía está vigente?

RC16: No está vigente. Fue una cosa muy inicial del proceso de ‘Actualización’. Se creó una comisión gubernamental que revisaba los materiales que se hacían antes de publicarse. En ese momento todos. Fue a inicios de la ‘Actualización’, ahora no me acuerdo cuándo empezó, 2010, 2011... Por ahí. Eso se cambió rápidamente porque, lógicamente, los medios de comunicación comenzaron a decir que no estaban de acuerdo con eso y se cambió enseguida.

Sara: Entonces, si miro *Juventud Rebelde* en el 2011 y lo miro en el 2014, ¿debería ver una diferencia?

RC16: Mira, te voy a decir una cosa. En aquel momento no se estaba cuestionando la ‘Actualización’, porque lo que estaba ocurriendo en aquellos momentos era que se estaban anunciando las primeras medidas de la ‘Actualización’. Entonces, aquel cuidado del gobierno estaba más dirigido a que no se tergiversara la naturaleza de las decisiones que se estaban adoptando. Ese era el propósito esencial de aquella revisión, para que cuando los medios lo dieran a conocer no fuera una interpretación del periodista que escribiera eso, que podría tergiversar en algo la verdadera naturaleza de las medidas. Pero realmente era una cosa un poco inquisitoria, un poco aberrante. Pero eso se quitó rápido.

Sara: ¿Ocurrió lo mismo en 2006 y 2008, cuando hubo el cambio de Fidel a Raúl Castro?

RC16: No, porque en ese momento lo que estaba ocurriendo era un cambio político. En ese momento no estaba ocurriendo un cambio de la estructura económica del país. Ahí lo que ocurrió

fue que hubo un cambio en la dirección del país, no un cambio en la estructura económica del país, que es lo está ocurriendo ahora. De hecho, este año comienza a ocurrir el cambio más radical de esa estructura económica del país, que es el cambio en la empresa estatal. Es el cambio en el funcionamiento de la empresa estatal socialista y en la naturaleza de la empresa estatal socialista. Este año comienza a avanzar ya el proceso de autonomía de la empresa estatal.

RA17

Journalist at *OnCuba*

Havana, 27 July 2015

Sara: ¿Cuáles son, desde tu punto de vista, las principales virtudes y defectos de la prensa institucional cubana? ¿Y las virtudes y defectos de la prensa 'alternativa'?

RA17: Empecemos por la prensa estatal, donde estuve hasta hace meses. He pasado por

todos los formatos: hice radio, televisión, y trabajé en un periódico nacional, Trabajadores. Allí estuve seis-siete meses. Soy de Cienfuegos, una provincia a doscientos kilómetros de La Habana. Y allí trabajé de periodista en el staff de reporteros de la emisora de radio provincial, y de conductor de espacios informativos en el canal local de televisión. Y luego vine para acá para La Habana. El espacio que encontré para trabajar fue Trabajadores, un semanario de la Central de Trabajadores de Cuba, hasta que finalmente decidí salirme del aparato institucional.

Vamos a empezar por lo positivo. Si algo positivo tienen -yo tengo que decir que soy muy crítico de los medios institucionales- pero bueno, digamos que una vocación de servicio y, no está claro, y es uno de sus defectos, su papel como medio público, todo lo contrario, es decir, los medios institucionales cubanos son herramientas de propaganda. También sus opuestos extremos. No la prensa alternativa -ahí haré una disquisición más adelante y aclararé qué entiendo por prensa alternativa y qué no. Por lo tanto, como no hay una dimensión claramente establecida de que son medios públicos que se deben a la ciudadanía, usualmente se deben al PCC y a las instituciones. Pero esa propia indefinición, ese rol hace como que vaya a medio camino entre lo público y lo institucional. Hay cosas que son claramente de vocación de servicio público. Hay programas de facilitación social que no se cobran. El prejuicio con la publicidad que imperó en el país hace que no se vean determinadas malas prácticas, o prácticas de publicidad encubierta que se suelen ver en otros medios de otros contextos. Podemos decir que hasta el mensaje llega a veces sano, desprovisto de segundas intenciones, con una clara vocación de servicio social, sobre todo en época de emergencia, tiempos de huracanes, ese tipo de cosas. Ahí siempre puede ser mejorable, pero ahí es incomparable la labor del medio. Cienfuegos ha sufrido en los últimos quince años cuatro huracanes de gran intensidad y el papel de los medios de comunicación, sobre todo de la radio, a esa hora que se va la corriente y que solamente quedan las radios de pilas, y el trabajo de los profesionales, los meteorólogos, los periodistas, los conductores para precaverlos, es una de las razones por las que en Cuba no hay grandes desastres desde el punto de vista humano cuando viene un desastre natural. El hecho de que este sea un país tan militarizado hace que por ejemplo la defensa civil sea militar. Y todo el mundo, en caso de catástrofe o guerra, rápidamente responde. Hay una estructura de mando jerárquica militar. En esa estructura, los medios de comunicación tienen un papel fundamental. Como lo que hemos experimentado en los últimos años son catástrofes naturales, aunque esté diseñado para la guerra, donde se ha visto el efecto práctico de esa movilización urgente de las personas -la gente que está en zonas vulnerables se refugia, primero en casas de vecinos, y luego en espacios públicos habilitados para eso como escuelas. Y todo funciona rápido, estándares de país de tercer mundo, pero la gente tiene un plato de comida y un techo seguro en esas circunstancias. Y además, tiene un medio de comunicación que están constantemente avisando de las zonas en riesgo. Ese trabajo es reconocible.

Lo mismo también que llevado a su extremo ha sido malo, los prejuicios con el sensacionalismo. La prensa cubana en absoluto es sensacionalista. No tiene nada de sensacionalista. Eso está muy bien,

porque todos los elementos de amarillismo, el periodismo rosa y todas esas historias se suprimieron. Lo malo es que se desustanció tanto el periodismo, huyéndole al morbo, que se volvió un periodismo chato, aburrido, carente de conflicto. Ahora en los últimos años, sobre todo con nuevas generaciones de periodistas y también con el cambio de pensamiento generacional que está viviendo el país, se ha vuelto un poco -pero es algo que no es sistémico, sino que depende de la iniciativa personal- algunos periodistas explotan más el formato de contar historias y ven que eso no tiene nada malo. Porque se acumularon, y esa es una de las cosas negativas, muchos prejuicios sobre la manera de hacer periodismo en otras partes del mundo. Es un proceso muy contradictorio. Yo estoy teniendo que hacer un ejercicio aquí de sistematización de cosas que uno sabe, pero que no se detiene mucho a pensar en ello. Es contradictorio. La manera en que se organiza la academia cubana, los estudios de periodismo de Cuba, al menos de los últimos quince o veinte años para acá, tiene un acento norteamericano que es innegable. Una vez, alguien me cuestionó que estuviera estudiando periodismo en Cuba. -Ah, a ti te están enseñando un periodismo Sovietoide. Hay mucho de soviético y de la propaganda soviética en el funcionamiento real de los medios, pero en lo que se enseña en las academias, no. Todo lo contrario. Se ve a la escuela soviética conductista de propaganda - además que eso sirvió hasta la década del 30. Después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, ellos estaban todavía siguiendo patrones de la revolución bolchevique y ya. Imagínate importar eso a Cuba en la década de los 70, por eso estamos como estamos. Pero eso se desterró de la academia cubana desde los años 80 y se asumieron patrones, sobre todo, de la escuela norteamericana. Como toda la academia cubana en todas las materias. La universidad cubana como sistema es muy ecléctica. No es como otros lugares del mundo, donde se casan con una escuela específica de pensamiento y todo funciona según esa base. Yo creo que la propia filosofía marxista leninista, que dice que hay que ser dialéctico, lleva a buscar: ¿quién tiene la mejor idea en esto? ¿quién tiene la mejor idea en aquello?

Sara: ¿Se ha mirado también hacia América Latina en la academia?

RA17: Sí, hacia América Latina y hacia España. Pero el periodismo español, excepto grandes ejemplos como Montalbán, Álex Grijelmo, El País, EFE... Eso se sigue, pero como oficio, el rudimento, la técnica de cómo hacer una noticia, cómo hacer un reportaje, todo esta inspirado en la escuela norteamericana, que es una escuela en la que el morbo, el sensacionalismo, son rasgos definitorios. Y curiosamente eso, cuando sale el muchacho formado en la academia y llega a los medios de comunicación, llega a la escuela soviética del anti-morbo. Entonces, ahí se produce un conflicto muy fuerte para los muchachos recién graduados.

Sara: Hay estudios académicos precisamente sobre ese tema, sobre la contradicción que puede surgir entre los valores ideales de los periodistas, y la producción periodística, que en el fondo es negociada en un contexto mucho más amplio.

RA17: Eso pasa con mucha frecuencia. Por eso es completamente entendible el grado de frustración que tienen los periodistas cubanos. Como positivo, yo señalo esas dos cosas, una vocación de servicio público no sistematizada, no asumida conscientemente epero realizada en determinados contextos y espacios, y una precaución ante el morbo y el periodismo sensacionalista que evita exponer a la gente a la manipulación.

Del otro lado, tenemos un aparato completamente esclerótico, montado sobre conceptos de comunicación arcaicos y vencidos que, en la práctica, demostró su disfuncionalidad. Además, yo particularmente creo que generan un efecto Boomerang que todavía no se ha medido, pero pronto lo podremos decir. Pero está claro de que la gente al estar expuesta durante cuarenta, cuarenta y tantos años a un modelo de prensa determinado, ese modelo de prensa sirvió al gobierno, al proyecto, porque le dio gobernabilidad, consiguió que la gente no pensara en otra cosa que las ideas que desde el proyecto, desde el gobierno, se ofrecían. Y eso contribuyó notablemente al consenso social. Pero eso se volvió en boomerang. Después del derrumbe del socialismo y de la crisis de los

noventa el camino que se tomó fue el de parapetar, meternos en la trinchera. Mañana no sé que va a pasar; hoy hay que sobrevivir. Eso que pasó y que está pasando todavía en muchos espacios. Porque aunque uno no tenga datos factuales, sigue siendo el país de la decisión: - ¿Hoy qué compro, la leche o diez guaguas? Entonces, cuando tú vives en ese contexto hay que comprender que son seres humanos los que toman las decisiones, no siempre de mala fe, y eso que no tenemos información de cómo funciona el gobierno en el interior, ante qué decisiones se enfrenta. Pero sí es un hecho que, sobre todo en los noventa, y hasta hace poquito, que tuvimos una bancarrota financiera terrible, aunque nunca se dijo públicamente, tú tienes preocupaciones tan simples como cómo llegar a mañana. Y cuando estás pensando en cómo llegar a mañana, te pierdes el pensar las cosas perspectivadamente, y te metes en el espacio de comodidad mayor. Y ese espacio de comodidad es cero crítico, cero cosas que problematizan la realidad en esa visión conductista que prepondera en esta escuela.

Son guerrilleros, la mayoría de ellos. Jóvenes intelectuales, una parte importante, pero que hizo una revolución con veintipico años. Luego, la historia, los enfrentamientos con Estados Unidos los hizo enfrentarse, más por conveniencia política que por identidad ideológica, con el modelo de socialismo real que había, que era el de la Unión Soviética. Nadie se iba a imaginar excepto el Che Guevara, y probablemente Fidel Castro que sí fue capaz de verlo, que el socialismo se iba a derrumbar en un punto. Estoy hablando de los personeros ideológicos del gobierno. No te olvides de que el jefe de ideología del Partido Comunista es un coronel del ejército, que antes fue guerrillero. Un hombre que está viviendo todo este proceso de transformaciones... Yo no separo la formación individual, lo que le ha pasado a esa persona. Eso repercutió en las políticas del país. Eso ha sido la misma persona, más de veinticinco años, decidiendo. Y la manera de funcionar este país es sumamente personalista. Un hombre generaba consenso por sí solo (Fidel), y lo que viniera de ese hombre, ya era fuente de derecho, casi. Y así lo decía. Una cosa que dijera Fidel Castro, no hacía falta someterla a discusión entre abogados y legisladores, porque ya. Aquí, sin llegar a los grados de culto a la personalidad, endiosamiento de otras dictaduras latinoamericanas, caudillismo, pero es que somos latinoamericanos, hispanoamericanos, porque Franco fue una experiencia. Gallegos los dos, además, Fidel Castro y Franco. Por tanto, son eventos culturales que no se pueden descuidar. Entonces, hace que esta persona, evidentemente, siga creyendo que los medios siguen siendo capaces de conducir la opinión pública como un rebaño.

Sara: Es una forma de concebir el sistema de medios que proviene de su experiencia de lucha.

RA17: Exactamente, pero que si no atiende a la ciencia, que está diciendo que eso cambia, porque además esos patrones científicos fueron superados. Evidentemente se pierde, y pasa lo que está pasando. Que lo dijo ya RC3, uno de los periodistas más preclaros que tiene el aparato institucional. Usted puede tener los medios, pero no tiene la comunicación. Y hoy en Cuba ya está pasando eso. El Estado cubano tiene los medios de mayor alcance, pero no tiene la comunicación. Eso significa que la gente hoy se está informando por muchas vías más que los medios estatales.

Entonces, ¿qué ha pasado? ¿por qué se ha llegado a ese punto? Por una ausencia pronunciada de... yo podría llamarle no sé si sentimiento, si sangre en las venas... No sé cómo usarlo. Porque que un medio de comunicación reaccione tan pasivamente ante una realidad tan cambiante, ¡eso debe ser que tienen horchata en las venas! El otro día había un medio norteamericano, imagínate los prejuicios, los estereotipos. Es un medio digital muy reconocido. Fue e hizo un reportaje dentro de la redacción del periódico *Granma* y lo tituló: La redacción más lenta del mundo. Porque claro, ahí deben de haberle sacado una frase de contexto o algo. Pero a *Granma*, realmente, no le interesa estar pendiente de Twitter para ver la última hora, porque *Granma* espera la orientación. Y para eso el Partido tiene su aparato que identifica los trending topic, que nos *Granma*, es su propio equipo de monitoreo, como lo llaman ellos, de todo el tema Cuba. Y todo lo que levante una alarma para ellos, eso activa todo un sistema interno del Partido Comunista, del que *Granma* es el último escalón ejecutor de lo que se decida.

Yo supongo que habrás visto un corto...

Sara: Brainstorm.

RA17: Exacto, eso no es ficción, eso es parodia. Pero tiene tanto de... La cosa es sistémica, pero es así. Imagínate, uno recién salido de la academia, con ganas de comerse el mundo. Te enseñaron que la última hora es esencial, que decidiste estudiar periodismo porque a ti lo que te gusta es estar en caliente (a otros les gusta hacer literatura, pero bueno). Pasó algo importante, tú llegas a tu redacción y dices: -¡Mira lo que tengo! Y te dicen: -Shh, espérate, que voy a llamar un momentico, a ver qué me dicen. Pues eso conduce a dos caminos: O te vuelves un cínico, o te vuelves un sumiso. O te vas del medio, o del país.

Sara: Algo que me ha llamado la atención en las redacciones es el vacío generacional. Encontré gente de más de sesenta años, y gente de menos de treinta. Pero hay otra generación intermedia que me cuesta encontrar.

RA17: Y esos que están ahí, están obligados. Está ahí porque hay una cosa que se llama la ley del servicio social, y otra cosa es Internet, que no lo consiguen en otro lugar. Otros están en La Florida. Hubo una época en que hubo un vacío formativo, durante los noventa. Hubo que abrir la carrera de periodismo en otras provincias del país, porque no había periodistas. Tuvieron que abrir otras academias en Santa Clara, Camagüey, Matanzas... En Santa Clara la abrieron la carrera hacia 2005, y fue la tercera. Hubo, además, una época de vacío formativo en que los pocos graduados entre La Habana y Santiago, o se quedaba en La Habana, o se iba del país. Por eso no hay una generación intermedia. La gente que tiene esa edad, probablemente fueron personas reorientadas, se les llamó. Ese es otro fallo que tiene el periodismo, la desprofesionalización que, además, está reconocida por la UPEC. La desprofesionalización del oficio. ¿Por qué? Porque maestros, veterinarios, gente de la cultura... se reorientaron al periodismo. ¿Cómo? Con un curso de seis meses. ¿Cómo hacer una noticia? Tal. ¿Y cuál era el modelo de noticia? *Granma*. Entonces, está claro que no se puede tener un sistema de comunicación que sea atractivo, que responda eficientemente, porque tienes una cantidad de carencias muy grande. Yo creo, sobre lo que está pasando con los jóvenes, es que muy pronto habrá que hacer otro curso de reorientación. Porque incluso, con una ley de trabajo social que te obliga a estar en la redacción, incluso con eso, ahora mismo -y es algo que no puedo documentar pero me llega todos los días por colegas de aquí y de allá- las redacciones del país otra vez se están vaciando. Ya hay jóvenes que ni siquiera esperan a terminar el servicio social para irse. Hay muy poca gente dispuesta a trabajar en *Granma* por su propia voluntad. Han perdido la iniciativa hace mucho tiempo, no supieron darse cuenta de lo que tenían arriba a tiempo, y no porque no se lo dijeran, porque ha habido una preocupación constata en los congresos de la UPEC por señalar los problemas del periodismo.

Uno siente, como periodista, que es un gremio de no más de tres mil personas en Cuba... ¿Tú sabes que es ser un carnero? Pero el carnero es un animal muy sumiso que uno puede conducir en rebaño. El cubano suele decir que lo tratan como carnero, que somos unos carneros porque no protestamos... En el gremio, esa visión particularmente es pronunciada. ¿Por qué? Porque eres una herramienta. A ti te tratan, depende de la persona, si más o menos despóticamente. Depende del funcionario del Departamento Ideológico de los Comités Provinciales y Municipales del Partido, y de ahí para arriba. Esa persona te trata con más o menos despotismo de cuánto a su carácter personal. Yo no sé si tú has podido estar alguna vez en una reunión institucional cubana, pero este país tiene mucho de finca, de caudillismo. Entonces, un líder regional, que no es el presidente del gobierno, que es electo, sino el secretario del partido, que no es electo, ese tipo puede ofender, pero ofender, en una reunión a un jefe administrativo porque no hizo su trabajo. Esto funciona así, sobre la base de la compulsión y de la presión sobre ese funcionario es que se mantiene este país. Se ha dimensionado sobre lo personal, sobre lo individual, no sobre lo sistémico, no sobre lo institucional. Entonces, eso se replica en el sistema de la prensa. Han pasado cientos de ejemplos en los que,

Machado Ventura, Esteban Lazo, cualesquiera de estos funcionarios dicen, ¿hay prensa aquí? Esto no es para publicar. A ver, si no es para publicar, ¿para qué me llamaste? Si tú invitas a un periodista a una reunión, tienes que asumir que lo que allí se discuta, va a ser público. Si no quieres que sea público, no llames a la prensa.

Sara: Entonces, ¿para qué crees que invitan a los periodistas?

RA17: Para que hagan la crónica social. - 'Se reunieron fulano de tal, fulano de tal, y estuvieron presentes fulano de tal y fulano de tal. Ah, y fulano de tal hizo un llamado a incrementar la producción'. Lo que realmente se discutió, no sale.

Sara: ¿Crees que pasó un poco lo mismo durante el debate de los lineamientos?

RA17: Sí, eso es casi un rasgo de país. Algo tan rico como eso, que fueron los debates, porque estar presente en los debates fue un ejercicio realmente enriquecedor, esperanzador, y que cuatro años después la gente se pregunta, bueno, ¿qué ha pasado? Porque la gente, de verdad se tomó en serio aquello de decir qué está mal, y qué quiero que hagan. Además, que yo he ido a varias porque tenías la reunión de los lineamientos de la Facultad, la reunión de los lineamientos de tu barrio, del aula... Tenías que estar en tres o cuatro reuniones de lineamientos, y todas eran muy similares. La gente, con igual ímpetu lo decía. Y los medios de comunicación, como si para ellos eso no estuviera pasando. Pero eso les pasa con todo, con todo, porque no es su objetivo reflejar una sociedad en conflicto. No, aquí no tenemos conflicto. Y si no tenemos, era con los americanos, ¿y ahora?

Sara: Eso te quería preguntar, se habla mucho sobre el síndrome de plaza sitiada, el síndrome del misterio, y cómo han afectado a la cobertura de la prensa de temas que se puedan considerar una amenaza para la nación pero, ¿qué pasa ahora? Quizás el hecho de que se dieran la mano no cambia la mentalidad, pero me interesa cómo la nueva relación con Estados Unidos se presenta discursivamente.

RA17: La Unión de Periodistas de Cuba acaba de tener su Pleno Nacional hace unos días, y no me quisieron dar detalles a mí, que soy miembro de la organización. Eso es profundamente irónico, triste pero irónico. Una organización que se dedica a la comunicación...

Sara: ¿Qué puede ser de seguridad nacional, para que usen ese argumento?

RA17: Reconocer debilidades. Desde hace cuatro meses y tanto no estoy allí, en parte como consecuencia de mi trabajo con los medios alternativos. A mí en el periódico me comunicaron que yo no era apto para estar en el periódico, una manera no muy elegante de decirme: -Vete. Pero yo siento que no lo tienen claro, y en ese pleno estaban intentando de aclararse ellos mismos. ¿Qué hacemos ahora? ¿Y qué decimos ahora? Pero es tanta la falta de cientifidad. Pudiera parecer una buena noticia que RC4 escriba una estrategia, que RC3 plantee una ponencia como la que hizo que publicaron, y luego retiraron de la web de la UPEC... RC3 hace una intervención en ese pleno. El sitio de *Cubaperiodistas* publica citas, no íntegro, y luego lo retiran. Pero dos o tres muchachos que la tenían o la habían copiado le dieron aire. Se dice que RC3 dijo que o todo, o nada. Y que cuando vio que la habían puesto por partes, dijo, fuera. Y él habla de este tema, pero en el plano de identificar que tenemos y un nuevo contexto y que no podemos seguir esperando. Pero ahí, yo no leí una propuesta concreta de, ahora vamos a hacer esto. Entonces, yo realmente no sé. Sé por referencias que están actuando mucho sobre la decisión discrecional de los respectivos editores. Transpoliar el método de funcionamiento militar al funcionamiento de la prensa, esa jerarquización y ese ordeno y mando, ha llevado a que los que nombre como directores sea gente que, realmente, no tiene capacidad de iniciativa. Es gente que trabaja esperando órdenes, y ahora no están recibiendo órdenes probablemente porque ni siquiera en las altas esferas haya claridad. Por lo tanto,

trabajando desde su zona de seguridad, saben que ya no es políticamente correcto hablar del enemigo, pero eso al mismo tiempo les genera un conflicto, porque eso es lo que han dicho y escuchado durante cincuenta años. Su educación, su dimensión está pensada en que el imperialismo norteamericano es el enemigo. Claro, ahora no, y se dan cosas raras. Por ejemplo, en el congreso de la UJC, salió un muchacho hablando del compañero Obama. ¿Cómo que compañero? Ese hombre está diciéndote claramente que te quiere tumbar tu sistema político. Ese sistema de cosas pasa cuando usted crea gente que no es capaz de pensar, sino de actuar, de recibir órdenes. Cuando se ha coartado la capacidad de iniciativa, pasa eso. Eso es lo que ha pasado en los medios estatales, el estado de espera, el *standby*. - Voy a esperar a ver para dónde gira, ni siquiera me atrevo a adivinar el pensamiento de mi jefe. No voy a ser tan creativo, que me voy a buscar un problema. Entonces, imagínate tú.

Vamos a los medios alternativos. Esa es una discusión que tenemos entre los muchachos, ¿qué debería llamarse medios alternativos? Si las llamas no institucionales, corres el riesgo de que te mezclen con gente que, si bien no son institucionales, responden a otra institucionalidad, que es la institucionalidad norteamericana. Son medios que se financian con dinero del gobierno de Estados Unidos, aunque venga por ONGs, por gobiernos europeos... Estos llamados medios alternativos han aparecido para darle espacio a gente que no quiere estar en el discurso trillado, mellado, caduco de los medios estatales, pero no comparte la visión de país, ni la intención oculta que tienen esos medios, dígame *14yMedio*, *Cubanet*, *Diario de Cuba*, que son medios en los que la mala fe se respira. No son medios patrióticos. Eso suena a cliché, a etiqueta, pero el nacionalismo cubano es algo que, por lo menos intelectualmente, importa mucho. Y la defensa de la nación, la defensa de un proyecto de mejor país para la gente hace que uno diga, bueno, yo no voy a definirme desde lo que soy, sino desde lo que no soy. Y no soy un vocero oficial, ni soy un tipo que se pasa el tiempo buscándole lunares, buscándole manchas al Sol. Porque este país es más que *Granma*, y más que los lunares. ¡Es tan variado! Las cosas buenas tienen tantos matices, las cosas malas tienen tantos matices, que el país real es el de los matices. Esforcémonos por contar el país real, hagamos el esfuerzo. Si aparece entonces un personaje como Hugo Cancio que logra, no sabemos cómo, establecerse y empuja la pared, se rodea, empodera a un grupo de gente en Cuba que quiere correr esos riesgos, los apoya, los defiende y, además, los retribuye.

No se puede reducir el problema a un asunto económico, pero tiene un componente económico fundamental. Voy a hacer una digresión, un paréntesis. Yo siento que le cambio la vida a un periodista cubano cada vez que consigo que acepte trabajar para *OnCuba*. Porque por un trabajo, ese muchacho va a cobrar lo que le pagan en todo un mes de esfuerzo, sacrificio, malos tragos... Las condiciones de trabajo son...

Sara: ¿Hay reticencia a trabajar para *OnCuba*?

RA17: La reticencia tiene que ver con una campaña de represión que se ha iniciado desde la UPEC en los últimos tiempos, en el cuál la propia UPEC ni siquiera tiene consenso. Ellos, bajo la cosa de la ética, iniciaron una campaña tratando de acusar a *OnCuba* de falta de ética, de la violación de la santa ética. Eso es mucho de doble moral y mucho de hipocresía, porque si hay lugares donde la ética realmente se resiente es en muchos medios estatales. Para mí es una falta gravísima de ética que los periodistas en Cuba sean conocidos por los no periodistas de las instituciones como una plaga que lo que va, es a comer. Eso me avergüenza.

Estos medios que han aparecido, esta tercera vía, lo que ha hecho es reconocer el valor del periodismo per se. Aquí se ha hecho mucho por intuición, y además, yo no lo veo claro, no lo conceptúo, pero yo creo que es por aquí. Ya apareció *OnCuba*, y apareció *Progreso Semanal*, que eran medios ya acreditados por el CPI, pero se suma un medio que es *El Toque.com*, que era la antigua *Radio Netherlands*, de Holanda. Evidentemente, hay una visión política, ese es un medio estatal, público holandés al que le dicen que tiene dinero para incidir en la apertura a la democracia,

en la libertad de expresión en Cuba. Más cliché no puede ser. Pero el equipo que allí estaba, o que está, no sé por qué decisiones (yo estoy colaborando con ellos desde hace más de dos años) abrió una política editorial completamente novedosa para un medio extranjero en Cuba. Bueno, que la construyan los colaboradores desde Cuba. Está bien, nosotros tenemos todo este problema del concepto, adecuen ustedes eso, y negociemos todo el tiempo. Entonces, dio espacio a blogueros periodistas de esta corriente. Con sus líos y sus cosas, pero siempre desde el respeto. Después de que negociemos un texto no hay cambios. La voy que habla de Cuba es una voz alternativa, digamos. Ese es un caso muy particular, porque *Progreso Semanal* y *OnCuba* pertenecen a cubanos, pero *El Toque* es un medio público europeo. Ahora se suma Periodismo de Barrio, que habrá que ver qué cosa es y por dónde va. Y eso con el panorama de los blogueros también. Como ellos llegaron antes que los medios alternativos, sentían que iban a cubrir esa necesidad informativa del pueblo cubano. Y los blogueros no entendieron bien la dimensión de realmente qué es ser bloguero. Está muy bien, pero ante la nueva realidad me parece que ellos tampoco se han puesto las pilas. Ya están esos medios alternativos que no estaban. Estamos en un momento muy movedido, muy fantasmagórico en el sentido de que tú no sabes por dónde viene el ataque.

Los medios alternativos, su ventaja es la de contar el país más cercano a la realidad, que la gente se identifique mucho más con el mensaje que sienta que se le está dando expresión. Pero primero, su alcance es reducido porque depende solamente de internet, y luego, a pesar de que reconocen más económicamente, no tienen staff propio prácticamente. Dependen de una persona que sea suficientemente valiente para dar el paso. Porque aquí, aunque tenga necesidad económica, ni siquiera se atreven a colaborar.

Sara: ¿Por motivos de seguridad laboral?

RA17: Hay de todo, pero va por ahí también. Mucha gente se decide a hacerlo pide efectivamente pseudónimos para estar más tranquilos. Y hay que aceptarlo, es el contexto de Cuba. Tienen ese problema, pero también recuerda que hay otros medios alternativos que no son necesariamente políticos, que son las revistas en PDF que están saliendo por el paquete. Eso muchas veces tiene más impacto que nosotros mismos. *Vistar*, por ejemplo. Pretexto, garbo, playoff de deportes... allí hay de todo, política lo menos posible, pero todo es político. Porque cuando tú estás defendiendo un sistema de diseño que rompe con la grisura de la prensa oficial, cuando tú le estás proponiendo a la gente contenidos que no están en los medios, es porque esos medios han identificado una necesidad y son gente que han tomado la iniciativa. Hay una necesidad, voy a responder a eso. No voy a estar esperando permisos, ni nada de eso. Eso son los gérmenes de la Revolución. Pero lástima que esos medios entonces, para protegerse, se metan lo menos posible en política cuando de lo que se trata, efectivamente, es meternos en la discusión política para poder transformar el país.

Sara: Vosotros también lidiáis con muchos problemas que vienen del aparato comunicativo en Cuba, por ejemplo, el acceso a las fuentes. ¿Me puedes explicar cómo se desarrolla vuestra relación con las fuentes?

RA17: Efectivamente, esa es una de las debilidades de la prensa alternativa, el no poder acceder a las fuentes oficiales. Y uno de los conflictos que se presenta cuando un periodista de un medio estatal colabora. ¿Por qué? Porque lo acusan de utilizar fuentes que obtuvo siendo representante de un medio oficial para otras noticias. Mi experiencia personal trabajando en *OnCuba* o *El Toque* es que siempre se pide que a la gente que claramente distinga, y si vas a utilizar una información que ha dado alguien, trata de que ya esté publicada. Blíndate. Tienen que hablar, y de hecho ha habido una pequeña apertura en la información que se ofrece. Y eso nos ha dado contenido a nosotros para dedicarnos a ciertos temas. ¿Cómo trabajamos entonces? Apelando a fuentes anónimas, eso es riesgoso, pero se tiene que hacer, y apelando también a ese nuevo sector emergente, que no es un funcionario estatal, que puede hablar. Porque el custodio de una puerta de un lugar te puede dar muchísimos elementos de algo que esté pasando ahí, anónimamente. La barrendera, ¿qué va a

perder? Por eso muchos temas que realmente nos interesan, no podemos tocarlos. Es la realidad. Este país se merece, necesita grandes reportajes, casi libros de cosas como la salud, la educación. Son cosas que están teniendo un problema grandísimo, pero que no puedes acercarte en seiscientas palabras acercarte a eso, no puedes acceder, la gente no te da esa información. ¿Cómo tratas de hacerlo? Es difícil. Pero lo que tiene que ver con trabajadores no estatales, cuentapropistas, cooperativas, eso es mucho más fácil. Acceder a ellos es sencillo, la gente lo asume. A veces tiene sus precauciones, sobre todo cuando nos ponemos a hacer evaluaciones sobre cómo va la apertura al cuentapropismo. Una opinión crítica al respecto, alguna persona lo puede asumir como que el gobierno no lo va a ayudar, o le va a enviar a los inspectores... Como le pasó a un grupo que se llama Ópera en la calle, y aprovechando la apertura al cuentapropismo abrieron una cafetería en un lugar abandonado, pero, ¡montaron una cosa! AP les hizo un reportaje y le cayeron los inspectores encima y lo cerraron. También ese tipo de acción punitiva como resultado de una visibilización en los medios es temida por algunas personas, incluso a veces de piden anonimato o no te dan la información. Pero la mayoría de las veces sí que te la dan.

En este nuevo contexto están pasando cosas interesantes. Ya cuando uno se convierte en un medio reconocido, las propias fuentes te buscan. No estamos en ese punto todavía, pero comienzan a darse filtraciones y cosas interesantes. Hay que ver con qué interés. A un bloguero le filtran una estrategia de comunicación, y ese bloguero con el primer medio con quien se comunica es con *OnCuba*, no con más nadie. La propia existencia de *OnCuba*, que no hayan decapitado *OnCuba*, es expresión de algo. No se puede ser inocente, no se puede ser naif con eso. Evidentemente, más allá de que Hugo Cancio haya encontrado los nichos legales, y juegue con los límites, el gobierno cubano no necesita mucho pretexto para sacarte de juego, y no ha sacado a *OnCuba* de juego. Lo presiona, se entabla debate, se habla de una nueva legislación que viene y que va a coartar la colaboración... Bueno, hasta que eso llegue, nosotros estamos aquí tratando de hacer periodismo. Y cuando eso llegue, habrá que ver. Porque la experiencia práctica dice que muchas veces esa legislación, cuando llega, ya el escenario cambió. Y si cierran *OnCuba* en Cuba, ¿hace falta que *OnCuba* esté en Cuba si ya está internet? Es muy complicado cómo se avizora lo que pueda pasar, y aquí también se vive al día. Llegamos por la mañana muy atentos a los conflictos, focos rojos, a la UPEC, a los voceros de la contrainteligencia y del sector duro del Partido Comunista como Iroel Sánchez, el rotweiler como le llaman algunos. Es un tipo que tiene mucha iniciativa, está todo el tiempo haciendo ver como que él tiene mucha información. Evidentemente, lo llaman mucho, es asesor del Ministerio de Comunicación, es asesor de la UPEC, pero realmente tampoco está tan informado. Es un teórico de la conspiración que se pasa el tiempo hallando y buscando sombras, buscando segundas lecturas para enturbiar el camino, y particularmente tiene un franco de batalla con *OnCuba*. Pero dijo que *OnCuba* era inconstitucional, y obligó al jefe del Departamento Ideológico a decir que *OnCuba* no era ilegal. Yo creo que a veces a él también lo contienen un poco, porque él puede obligar al gobierno a hacer declaraciones que no le interesa hacer para mantener un poco el ambiente de alegalidad en el que estamos funcionando.

Sara: Desde medios alternativos o blogs, ¿se puede presionar la agenda informativa de los medios institucionales?

RA17: Hay una caricatura que ya está en internet sobre el proceso de la noticia en Cuba, cómo primero sale como rumor, todo el mundo se entera, y luego ya no queda otra que reconocerlo en los medios institucionales. Siempre ha funcionado así, lo que pasa es que ahora la gente tiene más acceso y obliga a reaccionar más rápido. Pero todavía estamos en el plano de la reacción, no de la acción. La agenda país no la ponen los medios. Para mí no es el escenario ideal, porque la reacción es parcial, incompleta, no es sistémica. Y ni siquiera habría que esperar a la reacción. Como lo trabajamos aquí, no necesariamente nos interesa estar pendientes de la agenda estatal, porque además los medios institucionales de dejan el tema país para ti. Ellos no se meten en los problemas esenciales. Supuestamente no es la misión de *OnCuba* meterse en esos problemas tampoco, pero si nos preocupa como ciudadanos y nuestro público principal son los cubanos, dentro y fuera de Cuba,

tenemos que hablar de los problemas fundamentales. Pero evidentemente, cuando tienes todo un enjambre de gente que te están pinchando, y no esos que son tuiteros profesionales de un lado y de otro, sino la gente que está empezando a conectarse en la wifi, ya la gente sin tener conexión se ha apropiado de la tecnología y lo filma todo. Cuando eso pase de las memorias de los teléfonos a la red, vamos a ver qué pasa. Ahí sí que habrá el cambio definitivo. Ya habrá dejado de ser una opción no reaccionaria. No es admisible para mí. Mira la explosión de la gasolinera en Santiago de Cuba, nunca el noticiero nacional puso las imágenes, pero las vio el país entero. Eso lo que hizo es continuar socavando el prestigio, la credibilidad de los medios oficiales. Pero a pesar de que haya reacciones, no acaban de tomar una actitud proactiva en cuanto a asumir que la agenda mediática la pueden poner ellos, compartida con todos estos sectores de gente. Los medios, en todas las partes del mundo, generan agenda. No es que la condicionen, pero la generan. Los medios cubanos no generan la agenda, a ellos les generan la agenda.

Sara: Hay algo que has mencionado y que me gustaría que ampliaras. Desde los años 80 se lleva debatiendo sobre los problemas del periodismo cubano. Parece que los debates tomaron mucha fuerza durante el periodo de 'Rectificación de Errores', pero que el tema de dejó de lado durante el 'Período Especial'. Nuevamente, en el Congreso de la UPEC de 2013 parece que volvió a poner énfasis en la necesidad de cambios inmediatos, y que eso generó cierto optimismo entre los periodistas. ¿Me podrías explicar cómo ves tú el prospecto de cambios en el periodismo cubano?

RA17: Raúl Castro dijo en el congreso de la UPEC de 2008: 'Pero estos problemas yo los vengo escuchando desde los años 80'. A mí eso me pareció profundamente terrible. Yo soy muy pesimista en esa visión y me parece que el último proceso asambleario -todos los años se hace un resumen por provincias hasta llegar al resumen nacional- fue icónico. Esto podría ser rebatido por gente en la UPEC, pero a mí me parece que fue el proceso asambleario más vacío de sentimiento, más de doble discurso en mucho tiempo. Gente que usualmente siempre participaba, siempre opinaba, aunque fuera para decir lo mismo, para remarcar la necesidad de cambio, ya ni siquiera opinó. Y eso me llegó de todas partes del país. Gente que me decía: hubo gente que no habló, aquí la gente no opinó, ¿para qué? Puede ser que tú asientas, que te leas las declaraciones del presidente de la UPEC que es una persona muy entusiasta y dice que se percibe un ánimo... No, la gente está aburrida, considera que no hay una verdadera vocación de cambio, que los pasos que se han dado son muy pequeños, y que eso ha generado una desmovilización.

Sara: El año pasado, cuando hice la mayoría de entrevistas, me pareció que la gente tenía cierto optimismo, que aunque los cambios fueran lentos, ya se notaban.

RA17: Es un efecto acumulativo. La esperanza tantas veces invocada, y tantas veces frustrada termina en frustración. Yo creo que lo más importante que está pasando, a pesar del pesimismo, es la decisión de la gente de no aguantar más eso. Si bien no significa necesariamente involucrarse en una iniciativa transformadora, puede ser un repliegue hacia sí mismo. Eso significa que su proyecto individual, su solución a su vida es lo primero. Y eso significa buscarse una maestría en México, en Ecuador, irse a Estados Unidos, o irse al sector privado... Eso es grave. No hay un plan para retornar todo ese caudal que se formó aquí, que venga y que regrese eso a la producción. No, eso no existe. Se habla de un decreto ley que incluso ponga acciones punitivas a colaborar con medios como *OnCuba*. Yo no tengo información, solamente comentarios. Pero los antecedentes a lo único que me llevan a pensar es a eso. Quienes tienen el poder, quienes están diseñando esas leyes, no creo yo que lleguen muy lejos. La historia de Cuba a mí me dice que esas opiniones (de miembros del gremio y de académicos) no cuentan mucho. Mira los cineastas, ¿cuánto llevan? Y lo han hecho de buena fe, no han hecho una protesta pública todavía. Si yo fuera cineasta, hace tiempo que hubiera dicho ya está bueno ya, y hubiera salido a la calle con un cartel. No, se siguen reuniendo en el Fresa y Chocolate, siguen diciendo hasta aquí, hasta aquí, y ¿hasta aquí hasta cuándo? Yo ese decreto lo miro con mucha reserva. Mira los paradigmas: China, Rusia. En un país que no es ni China, ni Rusia. Y eso solamente se consigue apretando la mano. Una buena noticia, ya este país no

aguanta que le aprieten demasiado la mano. Aunque, lamentablemente, la alternativa ante el apretón de mano no es chocar la mano y que abra, sino evadirla. Irse, y ya. Eso es terrible, pero habrá que ver. Yo no me adelanto. Simplemente estamos tratando de seguir haciendo periodismo. Ante eso, lo único que me queda es estar convencido de asumir todas las consecuencias de lo que supone trabajar en este contexto. ¿Qué respaldo tengo yo realmente ahora mismo en mi trabajo? Y probablemente sí pueda ser punible mi relación con *OnCuba* o con *El Toque* o con cualquier otro medio. Por supuesto, no creo que se desate una ola de detenciones, no es el contexto ni nada parecido, pero que exista esa espada de Damocles es muy útil también porque asusta, desmotiva, desmobiliza a la gente. Aconsejan no colaborar, 'no te metas en eso'. No lo han hecho, pero ahí está la herramienta y si quieren, como decimos los cubanos, y no es una palabra muy científica, te joden.

Mira, hay que saber que uno tiene del lado de acá la sensación de que esto es lo que la gente merece, y que esto que estamos haciendo está cargado de legitimidad, no de legalidad, pero sí de legitimidad porque es realmente beneficiosos para el proyecto de país, para la sociedad, para la gente. Un medio como este, como *Progreso*, como *El Toque*, se preocupa más por la gente que los medios institucionales y opositores. Desde esa perspectiva, luego cuando nos enzarcemos en un debate con los que nos ataquen de un lado y de otro, podremos sentirnos cómodos con nuestra defensa. Porque yo creo que si tuvieran vergüenza, no deberían sentirse cómodos los que defienden a ultranza cada una de esas posiciones porque no son honestas. Cuando uno sale a la calle, cuando uno ve con un poco de dolor lo que está pasando, a dónde estamos llegando... En este país se creó una sensibilidad especial hacia la gente desvalida, no podíamos admitir ese tipo de casos. Y eso se está naturalizando a paso espantoso. Y entonces, no hacer nada ante eso, que es la postura de los medios oficiales, no es honesto, no es una posición de vergüenza. Entonces, por eso lo que hay es que hacer algo. Y hacer algo significa trabajar para un medio alternativo, abrirte un blog, participar en determinadas cosas y ya no sólo decirlo por el canal institucional que ya habrás visto que es el preferido: decirlo en el momento adecuado, y el lugar oportuno. ¿Quién define qué es lo adecuado y lo oportuno? Aquél a quien le convenga controlar los hilos del escenario. Entonces, nosotros estamos intentando hacer espectáculos por fuera de los hilos de ese escenario.

Somos alternativos, pero también son alternativos Yoani Sánchez, o *Cubanet*. ¿Conoces el chiste, ¿no? Todos los días la portada de *Granma* te dice esto está bueno, y se va a poner mejor, y Yoani te dice esto está malo, y se va a poner peor.

RD18

Editor at *Temas*

Havana, 31 July 2014

Sara: Cuando presencié las defensas de tesis de licenciatura en la Facultad de Comunicación me impresionó la libertad con la que los alumnos criticaban la cobertura de los lineamientos, delante de los principales directivos de medios.

RD18: El tema de los grados de libertad, como muchas otras cosas, no puede generalizarse al conjunto de la sociedad cubana. Los que miran a Cuba como un sistema totalitario, cerrado, monolítico, lo ven como si fuera una especie de leviatán en donde todo está constreñido a las reglas del funcionamiento del sistema, a la fisiología del monstruo; no entienden esto. No lo entienden porque no lo quieren mirar, pero es muy obvio. No hay que estar aquí dentro para verlo.

En el sector de la cultura, en el sector del pensamiento, de las Ciencias Sociales y de la academia, y en el sector de los medios de comunicación gobierna tres lógicas distintas, políticamente formuladas como distintas por razones históricas que sería muy extenso tratar aquí. Pero el resultado es que, lo que se puede decir o abordar en el área del arte y de la literatura, en el área de las investigaciones en Ciencias Sociales y en los medios de comunicación está gobernado no solamente por lógicas sino por mecanismos institucionales separados, de manera que, si usted se lee una novela, o ve una película, o busca lo que se dice en las revistas de Ciencias Sociales (las que hay) y lee la prensa, se va a encontrar tres países diferentes. No es que en uno reine la verdad y en el otro la mentira; no es así, no es algo tan simplón como eso. Cada uno tiene sus propias características en el modo de reflejar el mundo real y de entender el mundo real, no solamente de reflejarlo. Uno anda por ahí con una cámara y lo mismo demuestra que Nueva York es una ciudad horrenda que demuestra que es una cosa fascinante. Lo mismo puede pasar con La Habana, y las dos cosas están ahí, son parte de la realidad. El asunto es cómo las entiende.

De manera que esa incongruencia aparente se explica por la forma en que está armado el sistema político cubano. Si lo que vamos a hablar es de los medios de comunicación masiva, y dejamos por el momento de lado los otros vehículos también de la comunicación (porque el arte y la literatura, la producción en Ciencias Sociales y las universidades son también vehículos de comunicación social), si nos centramos en los medios de comunicación masiva lo primero que hay que saber es que son lo más soviético que hay aquí. Aquí nos pasamos la vida echándole la culpa a la Unión Soviética de las cosas y no hay nada tan soviético en el orden reinante de la Cuba de hoy como eso.

Es una concepción sobre el papel de la prensa, de la televisión y de la radio. Es una concepción sobre eso. Es una idea de que estamos en una guerra cultural en la cual hay que ripostar [expresión del mundo del boxeo: esperar a que el enemigo baje la guardia para atacar] al enemigo, es decir, pelean a la riposta. Es una cosa muy rara porque la política de la revolución cubana donde ha tenido éxito es donde no ha peleado a la riposta. Cada vez que ha tenido éxito es porque no ha peleado a la riposta, pero en los medios de comunicación se ha configurado de esa manera y, en la medida en que son las mismas estructuras las que gobiernan los medios de comunicación, el resultado es el mismo.

Si para producir una reforma uno cambia los que están al frente y redefine las reglas del juego, puede ser que las cosas cambien. Digo puede ser, porque la inercia está presente en la mente, en los

comportamientos, en la conducta, en las relaciones sociales que no cambian por decreto, ni cambian porque se cambie a los dirigentes. Puede ser que cambien; pero si no los cambian y no producen nuevas reglas del juego, sí que no cambia nada. Entonces, esperar que eso vaya a cambiar utilizando a las mismas estructuras es una fantasía. Es como querer cambiar la agricultura y ponerla en manos del Ministerio de la Agricultura donde está ahora. No puede ser, es algo muy elemental.

Eso no quiere decir que no exista dentro del sector de la prensa y de los medios de comunicación gente suficientemente capaz y con talento (los has conocido seguramente). Pero no son ellos los que gobiernan. Hasta que los periodistas de verdad no sean los que realmente tengan el poder de decisión, hasta tanto eso no ocurra, es como que un hospital pueda funcionar teniendo al frente del hospital, no a un médico, sino a otro tipo que no entiende (o que entiende otras ideas acerca de cómo curar). A nadie se le ocurre poner a alguien que no sea un médico en [un hospital] en Cuba, y a nadie se le ocurre poner a construir un puente a alguien que no sea un ingeniero. Aquí los que dirigen la prensa no son periodistas y, sobre todo, no son periodistas que entiendan cómo se forma la opinión pública, cómo se genera, sino que fueron formados en la vieja escuela soviética. En ese sentido es que son soviéticos.

No es culpa de la Unión Soviética, eso de que es culpa de la Unión Soviética es una fantasía. Esos periodistas de talento están ahí y pueden producir una televisión muy avanzada, muy fluida, muy eficaz en su comunicación. Ves, por ejemplo, muchos de los programas que se hacen en canal Habana y son muy diferentes de cómo se concibe el Noticiero Nacional de Televisión. No es porque falten recursos, no es porque haya que traer a alguien de la *CNN* a que diseñe los programas porque no se trata de modernizarlos, se trata de cambiar su concepción.

Tú ves que de pronto, después de mucha lucha, entra en el horizonte del radio-televidente una cosa que se llama *Telesur* y hay otra manera de hacer la televisión. Por ejemplo, los programas informativos. Ahí, el tipo que dirige el programa sabe; aquí no sabe. Entró en Internet ayer por la tarde y repite lo que dice la gente en Internet, pero no sabe porque no se formó en esa capacidad de poder discutir los temas internacionales. Esto es un campo. No lo puede hacer alguien que no domina el campo, e incluso en el campo hay especialidades. No se trata de ser fácil en la comunicación, se trata de saber, y ese que sabe y se proyecta de esa manera es capaz de orientar y de crear una relación de autoridad en relación con la formación de opinión pública, y formar opinión pública.

Lo que logran estos mecanismos, tal y como están establecidos, es que la gente no se crea lo que están diciendo, no porque lo que están diciendo no sea verdad, sino porque hay creado un reflejo. Hay que empezar por lograr disolver, erosionar ese reflejo que hay en la gente, que tiende a descreer la forma en que se transmiten las informaciones, en que se transmite el conocimiento de la realidad. Siguen estando llenos de consignas, siguen estando llenos de retórica, siguen estando llenos de lugares comunes. Entonces pretenden del mismo modo, otra expresión de esta situación trágica, hacer una proyección internacional, hacer una televisión para afuera que sea diferente, y en los tiempos que corren no existe un 'afuera' y un 'adentro' porque Internet terminó con eso. Entonces, lo que estás haciendo aquí hoy lo pones en un blog y lo está leyendo un tipo en Australia al mismo tiempo. O al tipo le interesa por la forma en que lo dices, o por la forma en que está presentado, o por los temas que se tratan y se conecta, o no.

Lo demás es la idea que tienen en la cabeza [¿Los periodistas? ¿Los directivos de medios? ¿Los dirigentes?] acerca de la educación política, que es un desastre. Está conectado con eso, con la idea de la educación política. Es como el arte como vehículo para la educación política. El arte no es para educar a la gente; ni para educarlos políticamente ni para educarlos en nada. El arte puede ser utilizado por los que educan, por las instituciones que se encargan de eso, y por todo el mundo, puede ser utilizado para la educación, pero el arte no es para eso. Entonces, es lo mismo. Tratan

[¿quiénes?] de convertir a los medios de comunicación en un vehículo para la educación. Lo que ya no se ve así, lo que ya dejó de verse así, es que el arte y la literatura sirvan para la educación.

Acaban de poner una película que se llama *Conducta*, que fue aplaudida por los maestros, que es una película muy dura con el comportamiento de los maestros en las escuelas y de las escuelas como institución. La crítica, fuertemente, y los maestros, la han aplaudido porque es verídica, es auténtica. Porque las películas no son para decir cómo es que se tiene que educar a la gente. Y los maestros, incluso los maestros, la gente del gremio, la han recibido alborozados. Es un problema, para decirlo en el lenguaje que se usa para esto, no es un problema objetivo, es un problema subjetivo. Todo es un problema subjetivo, no es otra cosa que un problema subjetivo. No tiene nada que ver con la disponibilidad de recursos, no tiene nada que ver con la conectividad, con el ancho de banda, todo eso son tecnicismos que no vienen al caso. Se trata de un problema de fondo, de un problema de concepción.

Como tú debes haberte dado cuenta, también entre los periodistas, como se manifestó en el congreso de los periodistas el año pasado, existe esta misma representación, esto no es un descubrimiento mío. De manera que existen todas las condiciones para el cambio, y lo que se requiere es la voluntad política para lograrlo. Para eso, hay que empezar por ponerlo en las manos de los periodistas. Hasta tanto no lo pongan en las manos de los periodistas, es como tratar de dirigir una campaña de alfabetización sin personas que sepan de eso.

Sara: Parece que tanto en el mundo académico como en el mundo periodístico existen muchas ganas de hacer un periodismo diferente. Al mismo tiempo, parece que hay una voluntad política. Si todo esto existe, me cuesta entender por qué los cambios están siendo tan lentos en la práctica.

RD18: Falta que las estructuras que se dedican a eso sean renovadas. Cuando tú dices que se repartan tierras y dejas eso en las manos de la agricultura, ¿qué pasa? Las condiciones están creadas, la política está, hay gente dispuesta a trabajar en la tierra, está priorizado, pero sin embargo ves lo lento que marcha eso porque las estructuras que están a cargo de eso no se han renovado realmente. No se trata de desarmar el Estado, se trata de renovarlo con una condición para poder lograr la política. Si no, de ninguna manera se va a lograr cambiar. Todas las instituciones, todos los aparatos que se dedican a eso están funcionando con los mismos criterios que antes. En el fondo de tu cabeza pueden albergar la idea de que esto puede ser temporal, transitorio, que estamos moviéndonos hacia otro esquema diferente, pero donde van a seguir rigiendo las reglas de la verticalidad. Sin duda alguna, existe ese peligro. De manera que, cuando a un director de un periódico tiene que elegir entre publicar algo que puede ser polémico o publicar otra cosa, lo que puede ser polémico le puede traer problemas. ¿Qué cosa lo puede respaldar para no perder su cargo? ¿Qué puede preservarlo? Que exista una nueva estructura, expresada en una legislación, en un orden constitucional, jurídico, que le dé a ese director de un órgano de prensa la posibilidad de funcionar como un empleado público, que no es [lo mismo que] gubernamental.

Ha existido durante todo este tiempo una profunda confusión en relación con los términos de público y gubernamental, social y estatal. Social no es estatal, y gubernamental y público son dos cosas diferentes. ¿Qué tenemos que hacer, inventar la bicicleta? No, hay montones de legislaciones sobre los medios de comunicación en el mundo, en los países que nos caen bien, y en los que no nos caen bien. Podemos usar la experiencia de muchísima gente, no tenemos que empezar de cero. Sin copiar a nadie, podemos revisar qué tienen de bueno en países tales como en los del ALBA, pero [también] en otros países que tienen medios públicos como Inglaterra, España, Francia, Noruega, como es el caso de Suecia y de Canadá, que tienen un sector público que ha cambiado, que se ha transformado, pero donde los conceptos que han inspirado a ese sector público, que los han animado a desarrollarse de una manera práctica, están justo ahí.

Lo que ocurre es que nosotros logramos con ese vacío legislativo y político... porque no hay una legislación, porque no hay una política que diga que la legislación tiene que estar ya. Lo único que

logramos con ese vacío es que se cree una dicotomía absurda entre prensa estatal y prensa privada. Nosotros no necesitamos ni la prensa privada ni tampoco el tipo de prensa estatal que tenemos. Nosotros necesitamos medios de comunicación públicos. ¿Qué quiere decir esto? No solamente que tengan su propia autonomía desde el punto de vista jurídico, sino que respondan a instituciones de la sociedad, a instituciones que respondan a distintos sectores de la sociedad, que sean controlables a través de eso, que no estén respondiendo a lo que pasó ayer por la tarde ni que les esté orientando el Partido, sino que sean las propias instituciones del sistema las que tengan una presencia en esos medios de comunicación. Las mujeres, los jóvenes, que tengan una presencia ahí, pero que los medios tengan una capacidad para poder desarrollar su trabajo con autonomía. Si no hay autonomía, no vamos a tener eso. Si no hay descentralización que permita que haya autonomía, no al margen de la ley si no de acuerdo a un orden descentralizado y horizontal, nosotros no vamos a poder transformar el sistema y nada de la 'Actualización' va a tener éxito: ni la economía, ni la producción de frijoles negros. Nada va a tener éxito, no va a ir a ninguna parte y eso lo sabe el gobierno. Arriba, lo sabe el gobierno. Cuando Raúl Castro dice que si no hay descentralización las medidas no van a tener efecto, lo que dice es eso.

Sara: Me han comentado que hay un debate sobre la creación de una legislación sobre medios.

Sin embargo, algunos entrevistados temen que la legislación, por sí misma, no cambie nada.

RD18: Pero ese problema no es el que tenemos ahora, el que tenemos ahora es legislativo. No solo en relación con la prensa, es un problema político de fondo que tiene que ver con la voluntad política. Nosotros nos hemos metido años en producir una ley migratoria que lo más importante que hace no es quitar el permiso de salida, como ridículamente dicen los que hablan sobre estos temas, sino lo verdaderamente importante es que deja la puerta abierta para regresar. En un país donde la población envejece, donde la gente se va y no regresa, donde las mujeres no tienen la suficiente cantidad de niños, etc., Si encima de todo mantenemos la política de que las personas se van y no podían regresar... Para terminar con esa política aberrante se pasaron años, que no fueron resultado de que no hubiera consenso con la implementación de eso en los organismos implementadores; no era el Ministerio del Interior y Emigración quien tenía parado eso, como se suele pensar; no era la seguridad de Estado ni nada de eso. No fueron esas instancias, no fue el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores que es el que se ocupa de los consulados, ni que había que recoger mucho dinero en los consulados. Había un acuerdo en relación con eso. Era una decisión política que estaba aguantada en un punto. Lo mismo pasa con esto. No se trata de que sea tan complejo articular un proyecto de ley que pueda discutir la Asamblea Nacional, que pueda ser hasta debatido por el pueblo como se hace con las leyes importantes, como se hizo con el Código de la Familia, y que pueda ser en un plan razonable, finito en el tiempo, y decir: para el 2015 vamos a elaborar un proyecto que luego va a ser promulgado. Pero ahora el problema que tenemos es que no tenemos la ley. Para entonces, tendremos el problema de que la ley no se aplique. Efectivamente, una ley tiene que tener el respaldo político y la voluntad, pero eso es como intentar hacer cooperativas sin que existiera una ley de cooperativas.

Sara: ¿Usted piensa que esa voluntad política existe hoy en día?

RD18: Esa voluntad política existe en determinados puntos del sistema político, y en otros no. En el mismo sistema político, no te estoy hablando de nada externo. En la parte cuando uno escucha a Raúl Castro en su discurso, en cuestiones de fondo, uno no puede si no estar de acuerdo con lo que está diciendo, pero eso no se convierte después en la práctica real. Uno tiene que pensar que hay instancias en las cuales las cosas no fluyen como deberían fluir, y que la prolongación de ese estancamiento da lugar a situaciones complejas. El tiempo de la política discurre con otra velocidad a como discurría hace veinte años. La obsolescencia del discurso no se traduce en resultados concretos, en los resultados concretos que el discurso dice (no en lo que la gente tiene en su cabeza), produce un desfase entre lo que se dijo en el Congreso de Partido hace tres años y en lo

que realmente se ha logrado hacer. Cuando nosotros vemos eso, estamos ante una situación políticamente muy complicada que afecta el consenso. El consenso ahora es complejo, es heterogéneo, incluye la discrepancia. Pero ese consenso es vital, no por contradictorio, pero vital. Al contrario, refleja la sociedad que tenemos. Ese consenso está perdiendo calidad, porque eso de que las cosas se prolonguen y se prolonguen... Mira lo que se demoraron en implementar la ley migratoria, mira los resultados de la ley migratoria en apenas un año y pico. La gente se va y regresa. Hay personas regresando. Eso es lo que a nosotros nos conviene. ¿Qué nos conviene a nosotros? Hay una mentalidad muy conservadora que está presente en muchas instancias.

Sara: Es muy curioso, porque el socialismo supuestamente se basa en la evolución constante hacia un modelo mejor.

RD18: Lo que ocurre es que el socialismo crea su propio conservadurismo, y no lo crea sólo arriba. Es un error creer que existe sólo arriba; existe abajo también, porque a medida que la gente va envejeciendo se van configurando preocupaciones y miedos en relación con el cambio. No es lo mismo el cambio para una persona de sesenta años, que aquel cambio para una persona de veintiséis. No lo pueden acoger de la misma manera, es algo que está en la naturaleza del ser humano. Pero al mismo tiempo, muchas de las ideas conservadoras (en el sentido de no cambio) están presentes en muchas estructuras que no son donde predominan los viejos. También en estructuras donde predominan los jóvenes te las encuentras presentes. Ese es un problema que permea al sistema de instituciones en su conjunto y a las organizaciones sociales.

La necesidad de responder a las bases es un problema que está presente también entre los miembros que dirigen esas instituciones, que no son viejos, porque se trata de la cultura de las instituciones, que es lo que hay que cambiar; no se trata simplemente del relevo. Ahí hay una dimensión natural y lógica donde no puedes esperar que alguien que tiene setenta años se entusiasme con que haya una apertura del sector privado, porque esa persona no va a empezar a trabajar en el sector privado con setenta años. A esa persona lo que le preocupa es su situación como jubilado, de manera que esa es una persona que está más preocupada por la seguridad social, aunque vive en una familia y también vive con gente joven que le preocupa. La cosa no se reduce a jóvenes-viejos, es lo que quiero decir. La cosa no se reduce a la posición frente al cambio. Efectivamente, hay cambios que benefician a determinados sectores de la población y a otros no, ni directa ni indirectamente. Eso también es necesario mirarlo al pensar en la dinámica general de los cambios, en las dinámicas y en las políticas que promueven esos cambios.

La propia idea de que vamos a preservar las conquistas del socialismo es una idea curiosa, porque ¿cuáles son las conquistas del socialismo? Que la educación, que la salud sean gratuitas, la independencia, el país como país... Pero hay otros países que no son socialistas que son así. Hay modelos nada socialistas que tienen estas cosas resueltas: que son independientes, que tienen una educación y una salud gratuitas, que tienen una seguridad social considerable, que tienen derecho al trabajo, una política social muy amplia. Esas son las conquistas que queremos defender, pero el socialismo es algo más que eso. Estamos pensando en preservar un sentido de la participación ciudadana, un sentido del desarrollo social para todos, un sentido de la equidad social, del respeto de la dignidad de la gente, y un sentido de la libertad y de la democracia que no son los del capitalismo. Que, por supuesto, incluyen la libertad de viajar, de expresión, pero que no se reducen a eso. Es algo más que eso, es cierta calidad de la libertad de expresión, cierto uso y cierta manera de lograr que la libertad de expresión se convierta realmente en un instrumento de cambio social y de desarrollo en beneficio de todo el mundo, un sentido de la justicia social. O sea, hay que preservar esas cosas. Si no, mejor nos dedicamos a ver cómo lo hacen los noruegos.

Sara: Estaba leyendo la compilación “Sin urnas de cristal”. En ella se debate la forma en que la cultura, el arte y las Ciencias Sociales han ido ganándose cierta autonomía. Sin embargo, esa

autonomía no se ha manifestado de igual manera en el mundo del periodismo ¿Usted cree que ha habido un problema de conceptualización del periodismo y de los medios de comunicación?

RD18: Tengo la impresión de que, así como los artistas y los escritores han avanzado mucho, te diría que en el ámbito de las Ciencias Sociales se ha avanzado más de lo que se ha avanzado en los medios de comunicación en relación con la política. Hoy, en términos relativos, el gobierno, las estructuras de poder político, apelan más a saber lo que los científicos, los estudiosos, los expertos saben del problema; ver qué cosa de lo que saben del problema puede servir de base para la promulgación de políticas. Después, lo que hacen es lo que hacen los políticos, o lo que creen que deben hacer. Pero hoy se tienen más en cuenta en términos relativos, en cómo no se tenía en cuenta antes a los científicos sociales y a la gente del mundo de las ciencias en general. Ahora, cuando vemos eso en el plano de los cambios, uno puede escuchar que hay gente que dice: “A mí me llamaron, estoy en una comisión”. El gobierno se preocupa por hacer uso del conocimiento. No lo suficiente, no como debería ser, pero más.

Donde veo una verdadera brecha es en la distancia entre lo que los periodistas saben sobre cómo deben ser los medios de comunicación y lo que se ha avanzado para esto. No es porque el gobierno no los esté escuchando. Creo que el gobierno los está escuchando. Porque en el pasado mi impresión, que no estoy en ese gremio, mi impresión es que esas sesiones de crítica, de propuestas sobre la necesidad de hacer cambios en la prensa, se reducían a los congresos, a los eventos. Si miras las agendas de los congresos de los periodistas hacia atrás, verás que muchísimas cosas que se están diciendo hoy ya se dijeron antes, y se dijo que se iban a cambiar desde los ‘80. Cuando miras lo que está pasando ahora, también te vas a encontrar que hay dirigentes políticos que se siguen reuniendo con grupos de periodistas, con representaciones de los periodistas para escuchar sus opiniones y darle continuidad a eso. Bueno, eso todavía no se ha traducido en los cambios que deberían tener lugar, pero tampoco es una situación congelada. Ha avanzado más.

Ahora, si miras estos tres sectores [el sector cultural y artístico, el sector de las Ciencias Sociales y de la academia, y los medios de comunicación de masas] te vas a encontrar espacios de realización completamente diferentes. La política cultural, le puedes preguntar a los artistas, no se hace sin que los artistas estén ahí diciendo y pensando. Se hace a través de los artistas que colaboran en eso, porque no existe una política cultural al margen de esa capacidad que esa política pueda tener de movilizar. La política cultural cubana, con todos sus defectos, que tiene muchos, se sustenta en la capacidad de movilizar a los artistas. Las otras políticas no. La política de las Ciencias [Sociales] no tiene ese nivel de democraticidad. Y no se trata de la democraticidad como valor. No, son esos los sujetos que hacen avanzar el conocimiento, y si no hay mecanismos que los hagan participar conscientemente en la fabricación de esa política académica, si no se logra hacer eso, no se va a llegar a ninguna parte.

En el mundo académico, la implicación es relativamente menor que en el mundo de la literatura. Te repito: no es porque en el mundo del arte y de la literatura no haya muchas deficiencias y muchos problemas que haya que resolver, pero en términos relativos ves las oportunidades, la presencia y el protagonismo que tienen los escritores y los artistas en sus políticas, y ves los del mundo de las Ciencias y los del mundo de los medios de comunicación... Se ha avanzado, por ejemplo, en el mundo de la ciencia en la medida en que están esos científicos que siempre han estado cultivados, cosechados, regados y abonados por el estado, pero no tomados en cuenta en la fabricación de políticas reales. Hoy, tienen una voz que los escucha.

Sara: ¿De qué ministerio dependen los académicos y los científicos?

RD18: De varios. El mundo científico depende de varios ministerios. No todos están bajo el ministerio de Ciencias, ni todas las actividades académicas están bajo el ministerio de Educación Superior. Explica detalles sobre ministerios [el entrevistado explica los detalles de los ministerios].

No veo una virtud en sí misma que toda la ciencia esté bajo un mismo ministerio. Y a pesar de que esa es la lógica, en la práctica no ha sido así.

Sara: Me preguntaba si el hecho de que estuvieran ligados a diferentes ministerios afectaba la forma en que se han desarrollado los debates.

RD18: Creo que la forma en que se desarrollan los debates está relacionada con las diferentes políticas. La manera en que las instancias políticas de arriba, la manera en que se ve eso desde arriba, si se ve o se tiende a ver como sectores separados. No le veo la virtud a eso, porque no creo que se enriquezca mucho el campo de la cultura, o de la educación superior, o de las ciencias, si se unen los sectores. Aquí, en la revista tratamos de hacer algo que es contrario a cómo funciona la lógica de la sectorialización, que es poner juntas la república de las Ciencias Sociales, las artes, los medios de comunicación... Ese diálogo es muy raro. A nosotros nos cuesta mucho trabajo, sobre todo porque no existen mecanismos establecidos que nos permitan eso. Nosotros vemos que existe un grupo de problemas que no se pueden abordar solamente desde un campo.

Ahora mismo, la Bienal de la Habana nos ha pedido que colaboremos con ellos en organizar algunos debates en el marco de la Bienal del año, que viene sobre las artes visuales, tanto nacionales como extranjeras. Porque las artes visuales expresan ideas. Lo veo todo el tiempo muy cargado [¿qué es lo que está muy cargado? ¿El mundo de las artes visuales?], no de una manera esotérica, ni abstracta, ni tratando de evadir la censura. Yo veo que dice las cosas y que plantea las cosas abiertamente. Pero eso, que debería ser algo natural que fluyera espontáneamente, hay que hacerlo, hay que proponérselo para que funcione. Y mi experiencia es esta, que se comparten un grupo de preocupaciones. Pareciera que los problemas de los científicos que se dedican a la biotecnología son otros, pero no es tan así.

Hay cosas muy particulares, pero si montas a científicos en biotecnologías con científicos sociales, pones a académicos, a gente de los medios de comunicación, a artistas y a escritores, verás que comienzan a hablar sobre un grupo de problemas comunes, los cuales, en un mundo ideal, deberían dar lugar a que tuviéramos unos medios de comunicación fenomenales. Porque en esos medios de comunicación deberían estar presentes, en lugar de lo que ocurre en países donde predomina la lógica de la empresa privada y del capital... Sería que esos medios de comunicación fueran tributarios de todos esos problemas. Entonces, tendríamos en los medios de comunicación cubanos algo que no ocurre en ninguna parte: tuviéramos a los científicos sociales, a los científicos naturales, a los académicos de más talla, a los artistas y a los escritores proyectándose, participando directamente en esos medios, que serían los de más nivel del mundo.

Sara: ¿Por qué no hay esos espacios en los medios?

RD18: Porque hay esa visión primitiva. Es la función que se le atribuye al medio de comunicación como vehículo de educación política e ideológica. Y entonces, claro, ¿quiénes son los expertos? Los que se han entrenado en eso son los mismos que se entrenan en la iglesia católica para ocuparse de la doctrina, en la congregación para la doctrina de la fe, que eran los que se ocupaban antes de ver cuántos estaban en herejía. Esa es una función muy vieja en las instituciones estructuradas como la Iglesia católica. Tú pones a un tipo que se dedique a vigilar el respeto, la vigilancia de la doctrina y de la fe, y al final lo que tienes es eso, porque terminan encontrando herejes, vigilándolos y quemándolos en la pira [¿?]. En el fondo, es el mismo mecanismo.

Sara: Me da la sensación de que los periodistas jóvenes culpan a los más viejos de los problemas, y los más viejos culpan a los más jóvenes...

RD18: Creo que hay periodistas que se acomodan y no quieren buscarse problemas porque tienen miedo a perder su cargo. No creo que eso sea un atributo de los viejos, porque hay periodistas incómodos, inconformes, que creen que ser revolucionarios es estar a favor del cambio y que el

papel de la prensa no puede reducirse a una función didáctica o pedagógica. Muchas veces, los jóvenes culpan a los viejos y simplifican el asunto, y lo atribuyen a que esos viejos son como caballos ensillados, para utilizar una imagen, que se dejaron poner la montura en un momento determinado porque fue necesario que lo hicieran, y nunca más han vuelto a ser otra cosa que caballos ensillados. Creo que ahí hay un elemento de verdad, en relación con que los profesionales y los intelectuales pueden haber asumido las necesidades de la política como cosas que les eran propias. Pero el otro lado de ese asunto es que una convicción política no significa que vayas a comportarte de una manera repetitiva, mecánica. Son dos cosas diferentes. No estamos en el año '68. Nada de lo que justificaba haber hecho lo que hicimos en el año '68, incluso lo que hoy vemos como monstruoso o erróneo, nada de eso hoy existe. Porque no me digan que los americanos representan lo que significaban para nosotros en ese momento.

Nosotros acabamos de hacer un panel sobre esos años. La problemática de los años sesenta era la de un país que estaba aislado, y ese aislamiento no te hace pensar igual que cuando estás con las personas que te rodean, y funcionando en sociedad. Nosotros éramos una nave espacial en medio del universo, navegando hacia un punto oscuro que se llamaba 'el comunismo'. Nosotros éramos los únicos que estábamos en eso, más nadie. Desde nuestro punto de vista, más nadie tenía esa hoja de ruta. ¿Qué quieres que pase en esa nave espacial?

Nos hemos olvidado del contexto, de las circunstancias en que todo aquello sucedió y que explican por qué todo aquello pasó. Lo que es verdaderamente un disparate, lo que es contraproducente para lo que queremos hacer, es que hoy se reproduzcan esos estilos, esas formas de hacer, cuando todo ha cambiado, incluida la amenaza de los Estados Unidos. No es que no represente un problema, pero es un problema que no se puede tratar de la misma manera en que se trataba entonces, porque nos vamos a defender del ataque masivo aéreo, pero no nos vamos a defender de otra cosa que está pasando ya; no cuando levanten el bloqueo, si no ya. Tenemos que tener capacidad para enfrentar esas otras cosas con los recursos con los cuales enfrentamos las epidemias. ¿Qué hacemos para enfrentar las epidemias? Desarrollamos mecanismos de inmunidad.

La inmunidad no se logra en una campana [¿campana?] de vacío, se logra en esa interacción y en la convivencia con esos gérmenes. Tu organismo está lleno de cosas que te pueden matar, pero que has logrado domesticar. Entonces, es necesario desarrollar anti-cuerpos, que no es caerles detrás a los mosquitos, no es matar a los mosquitos. Es necesario desarrollar anti-cuerpos que te permitan hacerle frente a eso. Esa es la verdadera solución del problema.

Sara: RC3, en las siete tesis que presentó en el Congreso de la UPEC, dice que los periodistas cubanos han logrado suficiente madurez como para hacer frente a los problemas del periodismo.

RD18: Lo que pasa es algo que tiene que ver también con la visión de que los jóvenes han perdido la fe y han perdido valores. Por una parte, el discurso es ese: los jóvenes son el futuro, está en sus manos el futuro. Y al mismo tiempo, dices que no tienen valores, que han perdido la fe. Pues entonces, el futuro está embarcado. Estás hablando de algo en donde tu papel como viejo es tratar de construir junto con ese joven, en interacción con ese joven, que ese joven desarrolle una capacidad para entender el mundo en el que vive, para lo cual lo tienes que dejar salir, lo tienes que dejar regresar. Cada vez que alguien sale y entra tres o cuatro veces, está mejor, porque su conciencia política es otra. No hay educación política equivalente a poder viajar. Cuando yo tenía veinte años también quería viajar. ¿Qué los hace diferentes? Yo también quería salir del país, y cuando tuve la primera oportunidad lo hice. Y esa es la única manera de desarrollar una conciencia ciudadana.

Creo que hay que rebasar ese eje de la razón de los viejos y de los jóvenes, que siempre me ha parecido una visión muy simplona. Entre los viejos he conocido gente muy diferente, gente que ha valido la pena y otros que no, y entre los jóvenes también. Los valores que tienen muchos jóvenes

me parecen bien. El socialismo es para hacer una sociedad donde la gente pueda resolver sus problemas, pueda alcanzar lo que quiere, no es para sufrir y martirizarse, ni para pasar trabajo. No puede nadie enamorarse de una idea del socialismo que no sea para mejorar. Y yo lo que sacrifico por el socialismo que es para mejorar hoy, no dentro de cuatro generaciones.

El apoyo a la Revolución no se produjo porque la gente se enamoró de Fidel Castro, sino que la mayoría de la población, que no tenía una conciencia política, la adquirió porque vio cambios fundamentales en su vida. Eso se olvida, se pasa por alto completamente. Mi mamá era revolucionaria porque consiguió trabajo. En el '58 no había podido conseguir empleo, y en el '59 consiguió uno. ¿Cómo no iba a ser revolucionaria? ¿Cómo no iba a ser fidelista? Y claro que estaba enamorada también de los líderes de la Revolución, pero porque le habían cambiado la vida. El socialismo es para cambiar la vida, no para vivir en las penurias y en las necesidades.

Encima de todo eso, que tengas que estar callado, que no puedas encontrar un espacio donde expresar tus puntos de vista, o leer una visión crítica que coincide con tus puntos de vista, o que te haga pensar, o que te ayude a pensar las cosas de otra manera... Encima de eso, tener que aguantar un discurso lleno de consignas y una televisión donde la gente repite y repite lo mismo con lo mismo, es ya la corona de la reiteración, además de que no tienes los problemas del nivel de vida resueltos. Ayer hablaba sobre cómo se vivía en los ochenta, donde tuvimos un gran debate público. Pero sin embargo, el nivel de vida que alcanzó la inmensa mayoría fue extraordinario y lo pudimos alcanzar porque teníamos a la URSS. Perfecto, pero esa imagen del socialismo como un socialismo de bienestar social, donde la gente se esforzaba porque la movilidad social era posible, porque podías nacer en un bohío y ser médico, o en un barrio pobre de La Habana y ser médico y salir de la pobreza, esa idea de la justicia social que nos ha acompañado durante todo este tiempo, hasta el 'Período Especial', los valores del socialismo, están ahí. El socialismo es para vivir bien y mejor, la mayor parte de la gente.

RC19

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Sara: ¿Qué impacto tuvieron la ‘Rectificación de Errores’ y el ‘Período Especial’ en el periodismo cubano? ¿Cómo se cubrieron desde la prensa estos momentos de cambio? ¿Qué características tuvieron en común y en qué se diferencian de debates actuales (cambios económicos, sociales, de mentalidad...)?

RC19: Cuando en abril de 1986, en ocasión del aniversario de la victoria de Girón, el entonces presidente cubano Fidel Castro convocó al país a emprender el proceso de ‘Rectificación de Errores’, ya la prensa cubana venía inmersa en un empeño similar que se inició con la aprobación de Resolución del IX Pleno del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC), un documento que, en su esencia, llamó al gremio al ejercicio de la crítica revolucionaria oportuna y constructiva. El 6 de enero de 1980 publica la prensa documento aprobado en el IX Pleno del Comité Central del PCC, “Sobre el fortalecimiento del ejercicio de la crítica en los medios de difusión masiva”.

Ese fue el inicio de una década en que el periodismo cubano realizó un sinnúmero de trabajos en correspondencia con el llamado hecho por el PCC, que constitucionalmente es el rector de la sociedad cubana y, en el caso de la prensa, su institución rectora mediante el Departamento Ideológico del Comité Central del PCC.

En ese decenio de los ochenta, que no pocos periodistas recuerdan como “la década prodigiosa del periodismo revolucionario cubano”, se hicieron sistemáticos en todos los soportes comunicativos trabajos investigativos de manera empírica sobre la realidad del país que fueron desde temas económicos hasta el de la prostitución; se crearon secciones que abordaban con óptica crítica disímiles problemas que hasta ese momento no se visibilizaban y que todo el mundo sabía que estaban ahí. Fue una dinámica muy interesante porque, entre otras cosas, los periodistas empezamos un proceso de aprendizaje y crecimiento profesional sobre la marcha que pusieron en la palestra pública sus potencialidades profesionales y compromiso con la agenda ciudadana.

Esa postura asumida por la prensa tuvo gran acogida en la población, no así en quienes eran objeto de la indagación periodística, entre los que se encontraban funcionarios y dirigentes del aparato institucional en todas las instancias. Los trabajos sacaron a la luz pública insuficiencias y errores de dirección, como también políticas desacertadas, algunas de ellas asociadas a copias que se hicieron del modelo soviético que ya comenzaba a hacer aguas.

Lo más importante de este proceso, que entre los periodistas denominamos como de “la crítica”, es que mostró que los periodistas sí estaban en disposición para acompañar a la revolución desde una postura capaz de identificar los problemas con el objetivo de ayudar al avance del proceso revolucionario y de encausarlo por un camino con colores propios. Los periodistas mostraron su capacidad, con errores incluidos, de dejar atrás el periodismo soso y triunfalista apegado más a la propaganda política. Muy importante también fue mostrar que los periodistas estaban en condiciones de hacer un examen crítico de su contexto y de aprender a caminar por el doble filo que generaba, para bien y para mal, el llamado “síndrome del misterio”.

Creo que lo que develó la prensa con sus trabajos críticos influyó también, entre otros factores, en la decisión de Fidel de emprender el camino de la ‘Rectificación de Errores y Tendencias Negativas’. No por gusto convocó a los periodistas y los medios a estar a la cabeza de esa acción estratégica que, si bien su eje central fue la economía, la copia al calco del modelo soviético en ese ámbito, también tenía repercusión en otras esferas de la vida social y política del país. A mi juicio, se trataba de iniciar otra nueva etapa de la Revolución como se demostró en el III Congreso del PCC realizado en ese contexto histórico.

Aparece la Perestroika en la URSS y, en especial, la Glasnost. Ambas se erigieron en un factor de mediación significativa ya no solo en el proceso de ‘Rectificación de Errores’ emprendido, sino también y muy significativamente en el campo del ejercicio periodístico cubano. El proceso soviético generó alarmas fundadas e infundadas, entre éstas el relativo al papel de los medios cubanos en el ejercicio de la crítica equiparándolo acríticamente con la Glasnost. Por aquellos días algunos dirigentes y funcionarios decían que con la Glasnost se estaba desmontando ideológicamente a la Unión Soviética y que la prensa estaba socavando los cimientos del sistema socialista de la URSS. Esos actores preferían una prensa laudatoria y no crítica, manejada bajo un criterio meramente instrumental, una sombra de la cual la prensa cubana aún no se ha librado.

En la recta final de la década de los ochenta y como parte de la etapa previa al IV Congreso del PCC, se desarrolló un proceso sin precedentes de consulta popular sobre cómo debería ser la sociedad cubana del futuro. La participación de la prensa cubana en ese proceso que involucró a cientos de miles de ciudadanos fue meramente descriptiva, puntual, fragmentada, localizada en el ámbito de la nota informativa como género periodístico fundamentalmente empleado. Ese relato estuvo normado bajo criterios preestablecidos por los decisores. Ese mismo esquema se ha vuelto a aplicar en otros procesos singulares de consulta popular llevados a cabo. Debo decir también que los periodistas en todos los casos se han pronunciado por brindar un reflejo más rico, creativo de esas consultas, conforme a la riqueza de las opiniones planteadas por la población.

Por otro lado, el advenimiento de la crisis económica recesiva en Cuba (conocido como ‘Período Especial en Tiempos de Paz’) con el derrumbe de la URSS y el resto del campo socialista del este de Europa, puso fin a esa etapa de la prensa cubana de “la crítica”. Una razón de fuerza mayor, objetiva, se imponía como máxima para la práctica periodística para esa etapa: “Salvar la patria, la revolución y las conquistas del socialismo”, hecha por el líder histórico de la revolución cubana durante el IV Congreso del PCC en 1991, a las puertas de la inevitable crisis.

Es decir, no había espacio para un acompañamiento crítico de la revolución que entraba en una etapa de incertidumbre, de lucha por la supervivencia. La orientación a la prensa por parte del PCC como su entidad rectora, fue la de fortalecer la unidad nacional y generar optimismo en torno a la posibilidad de salir adelante, que se podía encontrar entre todos, una salida a la crisis con la iniciativa, la resistencia y el heroísmo del pueblo.

El ‘Período Especial’ impactó de manera notable en los medios cubanos que vieron reducidas al mínimo su base material. Por ejemplo, se redujeron drásticamente las tiradas de los periódicos, otros pasaron a semanarios, la televisión solo transmitía cuatro horas al día; asimismo, las coberturas se redujeron por falta de transporte, combustible; también los grandes apagones conspiraron contra el trabajo en las redacciones. Se realizó un proceso de reubicación laboral de los periodistas para que nadie quedara sin trabajo en su sector.

Todo ello dejó una huella en las culturas e ideologías profesionales de los periodistas que aún persiste. Asimismo, la base material no se ha recuperado del todo y prevalece una preocupante obsolescencia.

Sara: ¿Qué factores han influido en la cobertura periodística de momentos delicados, de reflexión y cambios, como el ‘Período Especial’ o el XI Congreso del Partido? ¿Cómo ha influido la mentalidad de plaza sitiada en esta cobertura?

RC19: Como le decía en la respuesta anterior, es el PCC la entidad rectora del trabajo de la prensa y, por tanto, hace su labor de regulación y media de manera transversal toda la actividad periodística del país. Entre sus funciones está la orientación y control de la agenda de los medios, del uso de las fuentes de información, el tono y el lenguaje de los mensajes que se desprenden de esa agenda y, en ocasiones, hasta los géneros periodísticos a emplear. De ahí que las coberturas periodísticas estén bajo esa sombrilla regulatoria expuesta anteriormente a lo largo y ancho del país. Si ello es así en la cotidianidad, también lo será en momentos especiales a los que usted se refiere, donde se precisa de más control sobre el orden del día de la prensa.

No podemos pasar por alto que cada sistema político se da a la vez su modelo de prensa, pues como usted muy bien conoce, la función estratégica de los medios de comunicación de masas es inducir y formar opinión y con ello el consenso.

En esta misma dirección, la política de comunicación social cubana sigue estando condicionada por el paradigma de los *mass media* y la centralización de la información, a lo que se suma como un factor significativo de mediación la persistente postura agresiva de Estados Unidos. Ello implica que los decisores de las políticas informativas y sus funcionarios subalternos, ante momentos cruciales, como los que usted refiere en su pregunta, se sientan impulsados a ser más celosos en el cumplimiento de lo que consideran su deber supremo y, por tanto, esa actitud se traduce en control.

Si bien hay un llamado al cambio de la prensa que encabeza el propio presidente Raúl Castro, no es menos cierto que la voluntad política en esas circunstancias, como en otras, no tiene su correlato en lo que reflejan los medios y no es precisamente debido, en la mayoría de los casos, por el deseo profesional de los periodistas.

Sobre el papel del “Síndrome del misterio”, considero que sigue formando parte de nuestra cultura profesional y funciona en ocasiones a nivel de autocensura. No obstante, hay suficiente experiencia acumulada, olfato político y profesional para discernir cuándo está realmente la amenaza y cuándo se enarbola para esconder oportunistamente insuficiencias que atañen fundamentalmente al desempeño de la burocracia que es el principal enemigo interno que tiene la revolución.

Sara: Dadas estas condicionantes, ¿cómo intentan los periodistas cubanos cumplir su responsabilidad social con respecto a los ciudadanos?

RC19: El cumplimiento del deber profesional de los periodistas cubanos está indisolublemente ligado a su compromiso con la Revolución. De ahí que el interés por ejercer su trabajo con las exigencias de su encargo social es desde siempre una constante bandera de lucha, por hacer un acompañamiento más lúcido y efectivo de la revolución de la que forman parte y con la que tienen un compromiso raigal.

Bastaría examinar las memorias y los acuerdos de los congresos y reuniones más importantes de la Unión de Periodistas de Cuba (UPEC) para darse cuenta de esa preocupación y exigencia en cada momento histórico. La última de estas reuniones fue un buen ejemplo al que usted puede acudir.

De hecho, hay una contradicción que aflora cuando uno lee, ve y/o escucha el relato periodístico del acontecer cubano, incluso, muy criticado por sus mismos destinatarios. Ello parece tener su origen en el paradigma comunicacional aún vigente que condiciona el modelo de prensa. Por ello, sin una nueva política de comunicación social, resulta imposible fortalecer el consenso social para ejecutar las profundas transformaciones socioeconómicas que encara el país.

Sobre el particular, considero que hay consenso para ese tan necesario como inevitable cambio. El propio PCC, como rector de la actividad periodística, tiene conciencia y trabaja en función de ello. El avance, estancamiento o retroceso está en una frase casi mágica, en una expresión muy de moda en el país con toda la razón del mundo: “el cambio de mentalidad”, la lucha dialéctica entre lo viejo que muere desde una larga agonía y lo nuevo que eclosiona trabajosamente. De ello depende la solución de una verdadera telaraña de problemas asociados a la función de la prensa y de la labor de los periodistas a quienes toca continuar elevando su rendimiento y empeño profesional como elemento sustantivo para cumplimentar su encargo social en el nuevo contexto en que vivimos en Cuba. Si nos ponemos a esbozar apenas esa compleja ecuación se haría casi interminable esta entrevista.

Sara: ¿Qué ha hecho la prensa cubana por la Revolución, y cuál debería ser su papel en la coyuntura actual?

RC19: La respuesta en lo fundamental está contenida en las dadas anteriormente. No obstante, su mayor y estratégico aporte ha estado y sigue estando en la contribución a la formación cotidiana del consenso que es clave para la existencia del proyecto político cubano basado, en primer lugar, en el principio de la unidad nacional, la independencia y la soberanía, preservación de sus valores culturales e históricos, junto a los postulados programáticos que dieron origen y sustentan a la Revolución desde hace más de medio siglo. Ese es el gran mérito de la prensa cubana. Ese seguirá siendo su encargo, su misión fundamental.

Sara: En los últimos años se ha estado debatiendo mucho sobre el papel del Periodismo en la Revolución. ¿Qué consensos se han alcanzado? ¿Hacia qué modelo de Periodismo se está caminando?

RC19: Tal como demuestra la realidad desde sus más diversas aristas, e incluso desde la amplia investigación científica que se ha hecho por la Academia sobre el papel y misión de la prensa cubana en la última década, la actual política de comunicación cubana deja hace mucho tiempo que desear y, por tanto, está lejos de resolver la necesidad de una comunicación fluida, actualizada, transparente y oportuna que demanda el diálogo social en el nuevo contexto de transformación que supone la ‘Actualización’ del modelo socialista cubano para hacer posible el ideal de socialismo próspero y sostenible.

Como se ha expresado en foros políticos, profesionales y académicos diversos, se precisa de un sistema normativo que desde un pensamiento científicamente afincado en la historia y el pensamiento que ha dado vida a la revolución, pase a cambiar el paradigma y el modelo comunicacional vigente desde la construcción de una cultura comunicacional de la cual solo existen pocos referentes en la sociedad.

Ello supone sacar del reposo de los documentos la propuesta del periodista, académico y Presidente de Honor de la Unión de Periodistas de Cuba, Julio García Luis, de la necesidad del análisis del Sistema de Comunicación Social en Cuba sobre la base de la interrelación dialéctica entre el Sistema Social, el Sistema Político y los medios teniendo en cuenta las nuevas realidades comunicacionales local e internacional pautadas por la globalización y el paradigma de la Sociedad Informacional.

RA20

Editor at *Periodismo de Barrio* and former professor at Faculty of Communication, University of Havana

Havana, 26 June 2014

Sara: Quisiera que me contaras cómo llegaste a la facultad.

RA20: Acá en Cuba quizás es un poco diferente. Debido a la misma necesidad de profesores que tiene la Universidad y la idea de seguir formando jóvenes en la producción de periodismo desde el punto de vista práctico y docente, nosotros captamos estudiantes de quinto año que van trabajando durante toda la carrera y que son estudiantes muy interesados en la docencia y en la investigación y al mismo tiempo con una vocación más enfocada al magisterio. Cuando era estudiante me pasó lo mismo, que a la altura de tercer año en Cuba se sabía muy poco de periodismo digital por las condiciones, eso era en el 2003, y la profesora que estaba dando periodismo hipermedia es la que me pide que por favor si me interesaba quedarme en quinto año en la facultad y un poco que desde tercer año re direccioné mi carrera un poco a Internet... Creo que tercer año es un momento de definición, porque en primer año y segundo se dan todos los medios. Una de las cosas buenas que tiene la carrera es que tiene prácticas todos los años. Primer año las hace al principio en los medios impresos. Me comentaron algunos estudiantes que en España no es así. Acá desde el primer año haces prácticas y desde el primer año publicas y no tienes que buscar tú el lugar donde hacer prácticas sino que la universidad te ubica, es decir que siempre vas a tener un centro. Me comentaban que allá muchas veces tienes que buscarlo tú. Hay muchos estudiantes que se quedan trabajando en esos medios. Hay tanta necesidad de periodistas acá en Cuba que los medios agradecen mucho que los estudiantes se queden.

El día que viniste estábamos ubicando a la graduación más grande que hemos tenido que fue de 118 estudiantes, y de esos 118 todavía había medios que estaban pidiendo y no se pudieron completar todas las plazas.

Sara: Entonces te quedaste acá como profesora de nuevas tecnologías...

RA20: Sí, todo lo que tiene que ver con el periodismo hipermedia, todo lo que tiene que ver con el periodismo ciudadano y nos enfocamos en la disciplina que al principio tenía una asignatura y ahora tiene cinco que van de primero a quinto. La vinculación es desde primer año y a la altura de tercer año en el primer semestre tienen prácticas también en *Cubadebate*, *Cubahora*, las redacciones digitales de los periódicos *Trabajadores*, *Rebelde*, *Granma*, *AIN*. Todos esos medios tienen que ver con el periodismo digital. Ahora nosotros tenemos en el primer semestre una cantidad de horas clases que son para las redes sociales. Las conexiones son muy lentas e incluso había universidades cubanas que tenían bloqueadas las redes sociales y la Universidad de La Habana nunca estuvo en ese caso. Esta facultad estuvo entre las privilegiadas con las redes sociales pues se comprendió muy rápido que hacía falta. No es el caso de las politécnicas y tal. Acá sí, incluso desde segundo año se les va dando una formación sobre todas las redes sociales y en el segundo semestre de tercer año de periodismo hipermedia se da periodismo alternativo en la web, donde se dan estas herramientas desde el punto de vista ciudadano. Nos queda incompleto, nos falta actualización de ciertas cosas, la conexión es fatal, pero por lo menos la intención de enseñarles a los estudiantes es buena.

Ahora mismo estamos pasando por una ampliación de capacidades tecnológicas. Nosotros tenemos 4MB y ahora mismo se abrirá a 12 MB y se espera que aumente a 24, no es mucho, pero para nosotros es un aumento gigantesco. Esos 4MB están distribuidos de tal modo que se dedica una parte a navegación internacional, a correo electrónico y un canal completamente dedicado a todo lo que tiene que ver con consulta de revistas científicas. Los profesores o estudiantes cuando van a acceder a revistas científicas o cualquier cosa de esas no tienen que pasar por ese canal, sino que pasan por uno completamente dedicado a eso. Hay muchas cosas malas, pero hasta ahora la universidad ha tenido mucha lucidez para trabajar los temas dentro de la escasez que hay. Esperamos que con este aumento de 4 a 12 sea mejor. La universidad está invirtiendo también en su cable de fibra óptica, que no se tenía. La Universidad hizo una inversión en el cable y es por eso que pudo pasar de 4 a 12. Nosotros queremos traer el cable hasta acá para que la facultad pueda mejorar.

Sara: Una cosa que leí en los artículos es que hablas de Internet como una forma de abrir las expectativas informativas de los ciudadanos. Pasaron de tener una prensa muy oficial y controlada a tener canales alternativos de información. ¿Cómo crees que Internet ha influido en esas demandas y expectativas informativas?

RA20: En el caso de Cuba, quizás en otros lugares del mundo lo que no tienen es el mismo referente comunicativo que nosotros. El componente lúdico se perdió porque las personas que tenían acceso a Internet eran profesionales que trabajan y determinados docentes y por tanto recibiste acceso a la red con una determinada responsabilidad intrínseca. Estabas recibiendo acceso a Internet para ir más allá de la comunicación interpersonal. Nosotros decimos que ya los cubanos tienen una especie de responsabilidad.

Eso viene paralelo a las políticas implementadas desde el partido y determinados centros que piensan que la apertura de Internet implicaría aumentar la emisión de la realidad cubana. Ya no sería solo los medios oficiales cubanos, sino que cada uno de esos trabajadores que accedía a Internet desde su trabajo podía contar su realidad y se iba a multiplicar cuantitativamente. Una visión que incluso nosotros la criticamos mucho en el artículo, una visión muy cuantitativa, muy repetitiva, muy transmisiva y muy triunfalista, porque además esos discursos tienen que ver con un concepto de plaza sitiada donde cualquier crítica que le hagas a la Revolución puede ser mal interpretada y utilizada para construir un contexto adverso. Ese es el contexto en el que los profesionales cubanos tenían acceso a Internet en el año 2003.

Eso ha ido cambiando. Cuando hice mi tesis de licenciatura en 2008 analicé 174 blogs de periodistas y lo que me salió igual en los resultados de la investigación era un discurso muy político, muy repetitivo, muy cansón. Que de 174, solo 34 los actualizaban frecuentemente y que había además dos espacios claramente definidos: los espacios de estos periodistas y los espacios de la oposición política, los blogs que estaban surgiendo en ese momento encabezados por Yoani Sánchez.

De 2008 a 2014 que fue cuando yo hice mi tesis de maestría hubo un cambio. ¿Qué pasó? Se ampliaron las capacidades de acceso a Internet: se permite el acceso a público en hoteles y otros lugares, aunque es a precios completamente inaccesibles para la población cubana, pero se amplía el acceso. Esta ampliación de acceso a Internet significó ampliación de quiénes eran los que estaban conectados. Ya no solo eran profesionales en funciones laborales sino además entraron a jugar un papel importante estudiantes universitarios que tenían dudas, inquietudes con el país y tenían necesidad de expresarlo en algún sitio. Por eso es que se diversifica mucho la blogosfera, es decir, el discurso sobre Cuba no se construye solo desde los medios de comunicación oficiales no se construyen solamente en los espacios personales oficiales de periodistas sino además se construyen desde una multiplicidad de voces que van desde Yoani Sánchez con un discurso abiertamente opositor hasta discursos abiertamente replicadores de lo que vas a ver en *Granma*, en *Juventud*

Rebelde, pero dentro de todo ese concierto discursivo hay determinadas voces que asumen una actitud mucho más crítica con el país, mucho más fresca en la manera de expresarse y que un poco ha movido o ha intentado mover la agenda de los medios.

Se ha visto cómo determinadas denuncias que se han hecho en medios ciudadanos han encontrado o han tenido que ser reflejados en medios oficiales de comunicación. Ahora mismo nosotros tuvimos que pasar por un proceso sumamente engorroso que fue la detección de un fraude masivo en las pruebas de ingreso a la educación superior y la primera denuncia sobre el tema del fraude sale en un blog y a raíz de esto no podemos decir que haya una correlación directa, pero sí sabemos que hay determinada relación entre la salida en el blog, la amplificación del tema en la prensa extranjera al salir en el blog y la respuesta oficial ante esta prensa extranjera. Esto fue en el caso de los fraudes y hemos visto otros casos en que no sale en la prensa, pero se toman determinadas medidas, o sea, sin que se refleje en los medios de alcance masivo, ha habido denuncias en los medios ciudadanos sobre corrupción por ejemplo, que han tenido respuestas oficiales porque han salido publicados en blogs y han sido replicados en medios de prensa en Internet.

Sara: Mi impresión es que esferas muy diferentes y la posibilidad de expresarse críticamente es

muy diferente de uno a otro: tienes la prensa oficial, la blogosfera, la universidad o la UPEC, ¿tienen un reflejo estos debates en la política o en la prensa?

RA20: Quizás en la prensa no tanto, creo que es porque UPEC y prensa oficial están muy entrelazadas. Pero creo que los discursos en la blogosfera son mucho más críticos que los discursos que están en los espacios oficiales, aunque hay espacios físicos valiosísimos. Los discursos no solamente críticos porque lo que le falta a la blogosfera es suficiente argumentación y profundidad en sus denuncias que sí lo tiene espacios como *Temas* que son los últimos jueves del mes, ese es uno de los espacios públicos más profundos de debate en Cuba, no solo por los temas sino por la profundidad con que se abordan.

Sara: Aparte de la prensa oficial, ¿qué otros espacios existen para canalizar debates más abiertos?

RA20: Ahí están todos los sistemas que tienen que ver con los órganos del poder popular. O sea, la Asamblea Municipal del Poder Popular está compuesta al mismo tiempo por los delegados que se eligen en asambleas barriales. Esas personas que son atendidas tienen el deber de rendir cuentas a los ciudadanos dos veces al año, pero eso es en asamblea pública pero al mismo tiempo tienen la obligación de tener relación o rendir cuentas a los ciudadanos unilateralmente al menos una vez a la semana, no solamente que se llegue a esta asamblea dos veces al año sino al menos una vez a la semana. Esa es una vía para canalizar inquietudes de los ciudadanos. En algunas ocasiones se torna ritualizada, inefectiva, pero es una de las vías establecidas por el sistema político oficialmente. Están los medios de comunicación, la relación entre la ciudadanía y medios de comunicación a partir de llamadas, cartas, etc. El caso de *Granma* es reciente pero el de *Juventud Rebelde* es de hace tiempo. Está además determinadas relaciones con la Asamblea Provincial del Poder Popular y con el Partido. El Partido tiene un buzón en el Comité Central donde se atiende a la ciudadanía. Hay mucha gente que no encuentra solución en determinados lugares y lo envía al Comité Central del Partido y antes de los 30 días deben tener una respuesta. No significa que el problema se vaya a resolver pero tienen una respuesta, y el trabajo del Comité Central es muy serio en ese sentido. Te repito no quiere decir que todos los problemas se solucionen, pero sí hay mayores niveles de eficacia. Tendrías que hablar con alguien que trabaje allí.

Sara: A mí lo que me ha sorprendido de alguna manera es que el mundo cultural dependa del ministerio y el mundo de los medios dependa del Comité Central... Esta diferencia, estos debates...

RA20: Mira, Abel te puede explicar mucho mejor porque mi visión es poco profunda pues no la he estudiado. (comentan sobre esto 18.50)

Sara: ¿Cuál es la condición de los blogueros?

RA20: Alegal, ciudadanos. Ni siquiera como periodismo ciudadano, producción de información desde la ciudadanía. No tiene ningún estatus legal, ni periodistas independientes. En la mayoría de los casos no dependen de eso, se decían a otras cosas.

Sara: Me hablas de la mentalidad de plaza sitiada, ¿hasta qué punto crees que influye en la producción periodística y si crees que está justificada o no?

RA20: La relación de Cuba-Estados Unidos es muy compleja y eso ha condicionado la producción comunicativa. Determinados temas son considerados de seguridad nacional y en otras cosas que no son consideradas de seguridad nacional muchas veces lo que se cree es que una crítica puede ser usada para disminuir la obra de la revolución. Eso ha sido así toda la vida hasta que aparecieron los medios digitales. (ruido 22.10)

Entonces esta aparición de ciudadanos hablando de determinados temas con un carácter mucho más crítico. Eso va acompañado de un discurso oficial que por parte de Raúl Castro y de Miguel Díaz-Canel que apoyan la apertura de esa prensa. Pasamos por un Congreso de la Unión de Periodistas y pasamos por discursos de Raúl Castro donde dice que, excepto temas muy puntuales de seguridad nacional, la prensa tiene que ser capaz de tratarlos, y de auto regularse. Nosotros acabamos de tener la visita en Cuba de (no se entiende bien 23.00) y los medios cubanos lo dijeron prácticamente una semana después. Hay determinados conflictos que todavía subsisten, pero sí hay una intención expresa que se ve en el relato de los medios si lo analizas en el tiempo. En los noventa no, pero sí en los últimos años. Del año 2000 al 2004, si ves esos periódicos y lo ves ahora te darás cuenta que hay un relajamiento informativo.

Sara: Algo que no he entendido nunca hace muchos años, desde los ochenta, se habla de abrir, de cambiar la forma en que funcionan los medios de comunicación, pero después en los noventa se entró más en las medidas económicas. Habiendo una voluntad política aparente, ¿cómo es que no se ha cambiado hasta hoy en día?

RA20: Desde mediados de los setenta hasta los ochenta, cuando se estaba haciendo el proceso de 'Rectificación de Errores' donde había un mayor debate público viene la caída del campo socialista, estamos hablando de un 89 a un año 97, 98, 99, donde estamos tratando de subsistir y donde lo que hacía falta era darle comida a la gente. Creo que siempre ha habido una intención lo que siempre ha venido problemas.

Ahora tiene la nueva etapa desde el 2006 con el discurso de Raúl. Los tiempos en Cuba no son de cuatro años. Va a pasar mucho tiempo porque los medios tienen que resolver cómo van a sostenerse económica. Por ejemplo, la AIN es subsidiada por el partido, pasa lo mismo con *Granma*, Trabajadores es de la CTC y Rebelde de la UJC. ¿Cómo estructuran esos medios? ¿Es la publicidad una solución? *Granma* internacional tiene publicidad, pero está concebido para el público extranjero. La radio tiene mucha publicidad. Hay determinadas emisoras nacionales que transmiten publicidad. A pesar de todo no hay un modelo económico claro. Los medios estatales además garantizan una producción ideológica y es difícil esa relación. Ahora estamos más enfocados en el tema discursivo: que los discursos sean más críticos, se está trabajando en el aparato legislativo sobre una ley de información y comunicación de la que no se sabe absolutamente nada.

Sara: ¿Qué modelos se miran como ejemplo?

RA20: El modelo de Ecuador, pero el problema del modelo de Ecuador es que tenía un fuerte componente de medios privados y nosotros no tenemos ese problema, entonces ahí están los debates sobre ver como referente a Ecuador, pero ellos tienen otros problemas y está la gente que promueve el tema de la transparencia. Quizás es más necesario hacer una ley para Cuba. Quizás estemos mirando el modelo de Ecuador para ver cómo analizaron los medios comunitarios.

RA21

Journalist at *OnCuba*

Havana, 26 July 2015

Sara: ¿Me podrías comentar, desde tu punto de vista, las principales ventajas e inconvenientes de los medios cubanos?

RA21: A ver igual tengo ideas un poco desorganizadas, pero tratare de resumirlas un poquito la principal ventaja ahora mismo que yo creo que tiene la prensa estatal cubana es primero la disposición de recursos en todo el país. esa prensa tiene la posibilidad de contar con la subvención que ofrece el estado. Cada uno de los medios que representa o depende de cada una de las instituciones. Voy a referirme principalmente a los tres medios impresos nacionales. *Granma* pertenece al partido, por tanto, el dinero para eso lo pone el partido. *Juventud Rebelde* a las Juventudes, y Trabajadores de la CTC. Ese dinero que ellos necesitan, esos recursos, si se los dan específicamente esas organizaciones. Ahora, tiene disposición de periodistas, tiene automóviles, tiene una red de difusión de la información por correo electrónico, como eres un medio institucional te llaman para decir: mira en tal lugar va a haber una cobertura. En vez de llamar a la prensa extranjera (*OnCuba* está registrado como prensa extranjera) pues llama antes a la nacional. Tienen mayor disposición de conectividad a internet porque son medios estatales y son priorizados. Tienen mayor seguridad en lo que se trata de servidores. Y un mayor reconocimiento a nivel nacional en el sentido de que no es verdad hasta que no lo dice *Granma*, Trabajadores, o *Juventud Rebelde*. Básicamente son las principales ventajas que yo le veo a esa prensa. Muchas veces nosotros nos preguntamos cuanto pudiéramos hacer con esos recursos a nuestra disposición.

En el caso de las ventajas, el sistema de prensa está muy centralizado. Todo responde a un departamento específico que es el que dicta la política básicamente editorial e informativa de todos absolutamente todos los medios. No significa que todos los problemas que tenga la prensa nacional ahora mismo, el mal de los males sea ese departamento, sino el sistema que por más de 40 o 50 años ha estado dando vueltas, y ya es un sistema que se reproduce solo. Hace 50 años la directiva de la prensa nacional dicto una política editorial- así es como se dice así es como se hace. Los de aquella época se acogieron a una manera de hacer y de decir las cosas. Los que vinieron detrás tuvieron que acogerse a ese sistema o perecer en el intento y después que llevas dos o tres años en eso reproduces ese mismo esquema. Cincuenta años después, estamos reproduciendo ese mismo esquema de modo de decir, de hacer el enfoque político. Todavía incluso pongo de ejemplo, en la prensa nacional como que es un poco reticente a llamar a Estados Unidos ahora amigos. A ver al presidente Obama como un hombre honesto y todo lo que dijo Raúl en su discurso nacional. Sin embargo, si hay transformaciones, evidentemente. Pero las transformaciones son lentas. Así venimos cambiando el modelo económico cubano, sin prisa pero sin pausa, el periodismo cubano se está transformando sin prisa, y con mucha pausa. Entonces, en el caso de los medios no estatales, que muchos ahora se les llaman medios alternativos, tienen desventajas muy grandes. Una de ellas en contraposición con la de los medios estatales, es que no tenemos prácticamente recursos. Primero, no tenemos grandes oficinas, grandes medios con toda la disposición tecnológica y de conectividad que requiere hacer este tipo de periodismo. No contamos con la posibilidad de distribuir los medios impresos, las revistas, o los periódicos impresos, porque las leyes actuales así no lo permiten. Entonces, para un país que quiere hacer periodismo sobre cuba para cubanos se le hace muy difícil llegar a ese nicho de público. Porque en Cuba, las mejores cifras dicen que solamente tienen acceso a la red de redes aproximadamente el 20 por ciento de la población. Eso

nos frena un poco a la hora de difundir nuestro contenido. No tenemos los recursos materiales, no tenemos los recursos tecnológicos suficientes, no tenemos la conectividad... Mientras que ETECSA puede hacer algunas concesiones para el partido para que le de acceso a Internet a medios como *Granma*, *Trabajadores* o *Juventud Rebelde*, y que todo el equipo periodístico de esos medios tenga acceso a internet desde sus casas por tan solo 80 pesos o 60 de su salario, que eso viene siendo 2 o 3 CUC, este tipo de medios (*OnCuba*) que está acreditado en Cuba como buró de información, lo que implica es que pueda contratar en el mejor de los casos un apartamentico, una oficinita, a precios desorbitados para el nivel de adquisición que tienen los cubanos. Internet, mientras que en un medio estatal ustedes tener 2, 4 megas de descarga y de subida a precios que el medio no se preocupa, no lo tienen que pagar, los medios extranjeros tienen que pagar precios desorbitados. Hay diferentes precios, pero 512 megas de subida y 1 mega de descarga puede costarte 500 dólares, dólares.

Son desventajas que tienen estos medios además de no estar legitimados dentro del gremio de las fuentes. Cuando se hace una conferencia de prensa se prioriza a los medios nacionales. Cuando uno da las entrevistas, cuando un ministro o viceministro, el director de una institución, un médico, alguien específico va a dar una entrevista, se prioriza a los medios nacionales.

Tú dices que eres asociada a del telecentro, eres cubana, no hay problema, te voy a dar la entrevista. Incluso, dame el borrador para que ver lo que yo dije cómo lo vas a poner, para que no tengas ninguna equivocación y no cometes errores. Cuando lo hace un medio alternativo, choca con muchas barreras burocráticas, institucionales, de autocensura de las mismas fuentes. No hay una política de fuentes. Por un lado, hay directivos que dicen que la prensa es abierta, que hay que dar información, que los directivos que trabajan en medios estatales tienen que darle información al pueblo, pero todo eso se queda en el bla, bla, bla. Es una nube, que al final nadie impone ese respeto. Nos cuesta mucho trabajo acceder a ese tipo de fuentes para hacer reportajes de investigación más amplios, con mayor profundidad incluso para pedir cuentas a alguna fuente institucional por algo que ya veníamos investigando de la ciudadanía, del pueblo. Voy a poner un ejemplo. Vas a hacer un trabajo sobre el estado de las vías de transporte público o sobre el transporte y aunque no sea ni siquiera un tema delicado, aunque tú vayas a tratar las señales del tránsito y tú quieres saber cómo se hace, simplemente, que alguien te explique cómo es que se hace en Cuba. Algo sencillo como eso. El corresponsal acreditado en Cuba del medio alternativo tiene que ir al CIP, tramitar esa entrevista con el tratado de prensa de ese ministerio, del ministerio de transporte. El ministerio de transporte encargarse de bla, bla, bla...

Sara: Esa burocratización que tienen los medios institucionales, de fuentes, también afecta al trabajo de la prensa alternativa.

RA21: Incluso si intentaras hacer eso desde la prensa alternativa, tienes que pasar por todos esos caminos. Te puedes demorar tres meses, seis meses, y la respuesta puede ser no. Ahora, si lo haces por un medio estatal, de echo medios nacionales amparados legalmente, bueno, no es que los otros sean ilegales, pero amparado por instituciones estatales, puedes llamar directamente al encargado y decir: mira soy de *Trabajadores* y quiero hacer una entrevista sobre este tema porque nos han escrito a la redacción y queremos informar al público. Y en seguida, en dos o tres días, te dan respuesta. Cuando no es un tema delicado. Cuando es un tema delicado, le preguntan al Comité Central, pero el trámite es más rápido.

Ahora, ¿cuáles son las ventajas que tenemos nosotros? La ventaja que tenemos los medios no estatales, o alternativos, es que ofrecen una mayor remuneración. y un reconocimiento más allá del mérito por el trabajo, económico. Una nota informativa con fuentes propias de un periodista para estos medios alternativos representa mi salario de un mes en un medio estatal, el mío específico, que es de los más bajos. Y sin embargo, dos notas informativas o un reportaje de fuentes propias con requerimientos específicos puede representar el salario incluso un poco más, el salario promedio de la prensa estatal. Eso parece un poco de interés material, económico, pero aquí en

Cuba representa mucho en comparación con el promedio adquisitivo de la población, estamos hablando de un promedio adquisitivo de 20 dólares mensuales. Cuando tú te puedes ganar esos 20 dólares en un reportaje, que lo hiciste tú, que buscaste tú las fuentes, que lo hiciste a tu manera con tu enfoque, con los valores periodísticos que tú creías que deberías resaltar eso te estimula en el sentido económico y en el profesional. Tienes la posibilidad de crecer profesionalmente y contar la historia a tu modo, según tú lo veas mejor contado. No significa que no te editen, que no te recomienden hazlo por aquí, llévalo por allá, profundiza este enfoque, pero tienes libertad de creación, que es otra libertad que tenemos nosotros. Mientras que en un medio estatal el estilo del periodismo está básicamente establecido, no se dice embargo se dice bloqueo, se dice 5M, cuando van a dar alguna información sobre algún evento, un acto específico, donde estuvieron representantes de instituciones estatales o de organizaciones, se le da el nombre y el título nobiliario. Por ejemplo, General del Ejército Raúl Castro, presidente de bla, bla, bla, es un párrafo así. Y en la prensa cubana, para el pueblo no es necesario decir todo eso. Quizás en la prensa extranjera, de cara al nivel internacional. Pero bueno, todas esas cosas están establecidas. Y estos medios te dan la posibilidad de crecer profesionalmente, de estar aprendiendo todo el día de crecerte, hoy lo puedes hacer así, mañana necesitamos que se haga de otra forma...

Los reportajes son un ejemplo clásico. Yo soy profesora en el Instituto Internacional de Periodismo José Martí, y otros profesores también son de mi año, damos clase con la profesora Milena Recio. Recuerdo un día que nos pusimos a hacer el reportaje clásico de la prensa cubana: Cada mañana Perico se levanta al canto del gallo a sembrar las semillas de arroz. Como Perico, 50 campesinos de la UAPC Pedro Pérez... y ahí empieza. Después le pones un párrafo de Perico dando su experiencia, yo me levanto por las mañanas y entonces al cantillo del gallo bla, bla, bla, bla. Pero mi problema es que no tengo gasolina para el tractor. Abajo entonces te pone las fuentes autorizadas, el representante de la agricultura de ese municipio. Nosotros aquí estamos trabajando para que esto funcione así y así, y finalmente una moraleja. Y aunque Perico no tenga recursos, Perico trabaja y tiene resultados.

Sara: Lo tienes claro. Hay como una plantilla.

RA21: Pero es así. Muchas veces, ese tipo de notas viene directa del Comité Central. Viene en versión taquigráfica. A veces te dicen, no sé, pongo el ejemplo, el discurso de cualquier representante del gobierno cubano en la ONU, en la CELAC, en alguno de estos eventos o conferencias, cumbres... Tú la estás viendo por el televisor, lo están retransmitiendo en vivo. Un periodista de hoy en día tiene que ser capaz de hacer un trabajo en cinco minutos sobre eso, porque es tomar notas, debes tener la habilidad. Muchos de los periodistas de mi generación lo hemos hecho en vivo en ese tiempo, y sin embargo cuando lo publicas, porque a veces lo hemos publicado, y desde el Departamento Ideológico nos han llamado: Por favor, retiren la información. Esperen la versión taquigráfica del Comité Ideológico. Eso te pasa una vez, ya eso no te pasa más. Entonces, ya tú ves el discurso del mandatario, del representante, y tú así, qué bien, uy mira ha dicho eso, hay qué lindo.

Sara: Es decir, tú puedes considerar que cierto elemento es lo más importante del discurso, pero tienes que esperar a que te llamen, y te envíen la nota directamente con el enfoque y el énfasis que ellos desean.

RA21: Exactamente.

Sara: En ese sentido, ¿se anteponen valores ideológicos a los valores profesionales del periodista?

RA21: Yo no creo que los valores ideológicos que tengan los periodistas cubanos hoy se contradigan con los valores que realmente queremos transmitir al pueblo y lo que realmente quiere transmitir la dirección de la prensa del país. Lo que yo considero es que la forma en que ellos

quieren que se mantenga, una fórmula que pudo haber funcionado hace 50 años, esta prensa triunfalista, este tipo de información de que no hay arroz, pero no importa, venceremos, esa fórmula que pudo haber funcionado hace 50 años, hoy en el siglo 21 ya no funciona, no está dando resultados. Entonces, nosotros queremos dar esa ideología, esa información, haciendo periodismo del siglo 21 y cambiando en ese periodismo lo que deba ser cambiado. Digo algo que he vivido. Lo viví antes de ser periodista, y lo veo todos los días cuando converso con alguien, o escucho hablar a alguien hablar de la prensa cubana -cuando se habla de prensa cubana, los medios alternativos no forman parte de la prensa cubana. Incluso, nosotros los periodistas nos estamos reseteando en ese sentido, para cuando decimos prensa cubana incluirnos a todos. Pero es un proceso. Entonces, la prensa nacional, estatal, está deslegitimada por completo. Puede salir el mejor reportaje en *Granma*, el mejor reportaje en *Cubadebate*, *Juventud Rebelde*, Trabajadores, que lo leen pocas personas, se leen porque no tienen competencia, porque no tienen posibilidad de acceder en otro lugar. Está deslegitimada cuando tú dices que eres periodista y te dicen, ah sí, como dices es mentira. Yo sé que sucede en el mundo entero y yo sé que cada periodista responde a cada dueño, y la cadena noticiosa, etc, pero la visión que tenemos aquí es que del lado de allá hay mucha libertad de prensa, la gente dice lo que quiere, cuando quiere, como quiere, y que adentro no se habla de represión o de censura, pero la prensa está deslegitimada, la prensa no funciona, la prensa dice mentiras.

Sara: Cuando he hablado con profesores o gente que trabaja para medios institucionales me dicen: Es verdad que la gente está perdiendo confianza en la prensa, pero la prensa cubana no miente. Quizás no lo diga todo, pero no miente. ¿Por qué hay esa sensación de que es mentira?

RA21: Eso es verdad. A ver, la percepción en sí es que dice mentiras, pero es cómo se

expresan: la prensa dice mentira, allá va ese periodista, seguro que está diciendo mentiras. Primero, porque cuando es una fuente estatal la que te habla, los mandatarios, los presidentes, esa fuente autorizada te dice hemos producido 400 mil toneladas de arroz, el periodista lo pone en boca de esa persona. El jefe de la UPC tal informó que se habían producido 400 mil toneladas de arroz para la provincia. Y la persona de esa provincia que está leyendo en ese momento no ve el arroz. ¿Quién lo paga? No la fuente que te informó, sino la prensa, el periodista. Cuando tú llevas 50 años reproduciendo ese modelo, cuando tú llevas 50 años diciendo que se produjeron las 400 mil toneladas de arroz, pero el campesino o las personas no ven el arroz en sus mercados, piensan eso. Pero es verdad, la prensa no miente.

Sara: Julio César Guanche habla de una fractura cosmovisiva. El hecho de que la gente no se sienta identificada en su vida diaria con lo que lee, quizás sea eso lo que contrasta en los medios con su vida diaria.

RA21: A ver, yo sí tengo que la prensa cubana, estatal o alternativa, no dice mentiras. Lo que dice es solamente una parte de la verdad. La parte de la verdad más triunfalista, quizás. O si no, empieza diciéndote que se han muerto 300 mil reses, algo de la dieta básica del cubano, pero no importa, seguiremos en combate. Entonces, eso, donde tú dices se han muerto 300 mil reses, vienen medios alternativos y van a los lugares y te dicen por qué se murieron las reses, qué está sucediendo, quién tiene la responsabilidad, a quién hay que culpar, qué hay que hacer. Vienen estos medios y te dan esas respuestas que no te dan los medios estatales. Y entonces, es ahí donde existe esa dicotomía. Los cubanos no se ven en su mayoría reflejados en esa prensa. Pero igual, pero me parece que tampoco se reconocen en la otra porque tampoco tienen acceso. Y entonces, creo que por ahí viene lo de que los periodistas cubanos dicen mentiras. Pero mentiras, como que venga alguien y te diga... Tienes que decirlo así. Aunque no sé, siempre los datos que te ofrecen son los datos más reales y verdaderos que te da la fuente. Si es la fuente la que miente, no es el periodista.

Sara: Claro, ahí entra la capacidad del periodista de contrastar fuentes. Sabes que en BBC no se publica nada que no haya sido confirmado por dos fuentes que lo atestigüen. Entonces, muchos

periodistas me hablan del acceso a las fuentes incluso trabajando desde medios institucionales. Su acceso, como tú dices, es siempre a fuentes legitimadas desde el sistema político. ¿Qué otras fuentes incluís vosotros en vuestro trabajo diario? ¿Cuando trabajas en un medio alternativo, qué fuentes se incluyen, o se intentan incluir, en el trabajo periodístico?

RA21: ¿Sabes cuál es la fuente más importante que incluimos nosotros en On Cuba? El pueblo, es el pueblo. Aquí, en la prensa nacional no se le da la voz al pueblo. Se le da la voz a la persona que habla en consecuencia con la visión ideológica que se quiere dar del tema específico tratado. Pero el que habla negativamente, se maquilla esa opinión negativa. Te pongo un ejemplo reciente que a nosotros, de cierta forma, nos golpeó un poco, es cuando las pasadas lluvias, hubo como tres muertos, la situación estuvo tensa. ¿Qué hicieron la TV y la prensa nacional? El reportaje que más me impactó fue a las 9 de la noche, salió un periodista del sistema informativo, fue al lugar donde más problemas hubo, el agua subió como tres metros, las personas perdieron todos los refrigeradores, camas, en fin, fue una desgracia total. Y cosas a las que el pueblo cubano no está acostumbrado. Quizás en otros lugares te digan lo contrario, pero nosotros no estamos acostumbrados a ese nivel de desastre. El vecino más afectado se lleva las cosas y se va para casa de otro vecino, hay mucha solidaridad. Y eso fue de repente y nos impactó. ¿Qué hizo la prensa nacional? Fue a ese lugar a las 9 de la noche. ¿A quién entrevistó la prensa nacional? Al jefe de los bomberos, al presidente de los CDR que casualmente era un militar, a la presidenta de albergues del municipio, a la presidenta de la FMC, al de la juventud, y a un afectado. Y ese afectado dijo que lo había perdido todo, pero no importa, seguimos luchando. Y cuando nosotros fuimos a eso, recuerdo que nos impactó. Recuerdo que dije, yo no puedo creer que todo esté bien, que todo esté resuelto. Conociendo cómo funcionan las cosas en este país. ¿Qué hicimos nosotros? Cámara en mano, grabadora en mano. Los pocos recursos que teníamos, nos fuimos hasta allá. ¿Qué había sucedido? En ese lugar estaba la delegación. Dos cuerdas más para allá a las 9 de la noche todavía no había llegado nadie. Estaban las personas con el agua al cuello. Incluso encontramos una historia, que la publicamos después como un especial a parte, de una señora que decía que todos los años ocurrían inundaciones similares por esa zona del malecón donde ella vivía. Y la señora vive de la mitad de media casa hacia arriba. La cama la tiene a los dos metros, el refrigerador lo tiene en una escalerita, su closet empieza desde la mitad hacia arriba, tiene una escalerita para coger las cosas y hasta para subirse arriba de la cama. Ella no se sienta, tiene una sillita de hierro que es la que corre para aquí y para allá y tiene los sillones colgados en la pared. Si viene una visita específica, llama al vecino, el vecino le baja los sillones, y luego los vuelve a subir. Historias de ese tipo, personas contando lo que les sucedió, lo que perdieron, tratamos de cubrirlo todo. Hicimos un trabajo con las máximas autoridades a las cuales pudimos llegar indagado las causas de la repentina inundación de La Habana.

Hicimos el primer trabajo con el testimonio de los afectados. Humanizamos el asunto. Y entonces, hicimos el otro trabajo, que reflejaba que no era una cuestión de un día, es una cosa que sucede (inciso sobre experiencia personal). Y entonces, tratamos de recorrer todo el espectro posible y ninguna de esas cosas se trató básicamente en la prensa. Incluso, cuando nosotros vinimos ese día en la noche, y ya teníamos los tres muertos, en la prensa sólo aparecían dos. Teníamos, incluso, una imagen de una de las señoras, cuando la sacaban, que falleció cuando la sacaban, porque los vecinos habían estado filmando. Teníamos testimonios de las personas de la funeraria sobre el fallecido que la prensa nacional todavía no había dado. Todas esas cosas nosotros siempre intentamos humanizar a las personas, y que los cubanos sí vean reflejado lo que están viviendo.

Sara: Analizando la prensa nacional, sí que he encontrado a gente que forma parte del pueblo hablando; pero no parece que hablen desde su experiencia subjetiva, sino en representación de un organismo partidista. Como tú dices, esa subjetividad es la que falta. No se trata de reflejar al pueblo, sino de quién representa esa persona cuando está hablando.

RA21: Fíjate hasta qué punto llega que amigas mías y yo hemos ido a buscar entrevistas a las personas y nos dicen: para qué te voy a hablar, si tú no vas a poner lo que yo diga. Hemos tenido que decir, mire, no se preocupe, hable. ¿Usted tiene algún miedo? ¿Tiene alguna pena? Hable, nosotros valoramos, no se preocupe. Y hemos tenido que argumentar o justificar para que esa persona hable, porque cree que no lo vamos a poner.

Sara: Hay ese cinismo de alguna manera entre la población.

RA21: Quizás no esté hablando en representación del grueso de la prensa nacional por sí, pero la mayoría de los que trabajan en medios alternativos, también trabajan en medios estatales. Pero este reconocimiento de lo que está mal hecho en la prensa estatal lo tiene casi el gremio periodístico en su totalidad. Incluso, personas de mi generación, un poquito antes o después, reconocen esas debilidades en la prensa estatal y son las mismas personas que reconoce qué es lo que está mal hecho, qué se debe cambiar, que oyen la radio o la televisión y dicen: mira la barbaridad que ha dicho ese periodista. Y empiezan, o intentan cambiar eso, y en algún momento logran resultados. Pero la mayoría de las veces, al menos en mi experiencia, es que te empiezan a mutilar, y entonces te engullen en ese mecanismo, en ese sistema, y ya después de dos o tres años ya reproduces la misma prensa para no sentirte desanimado. O ya te desanimas tanto que dices, a ver, ¿qué es lo que quieres? ¿Cuatro párrafos? Pues toma esos cuatro párrafos.

Sara: Tú que tienes esa experiencia doble. Yo he escuchado dos versiones. Según una versión, los medios alternativos están impactando la agenda de los medios estatales. Que temas que eran muy poco visibles, ahora salen en blogs o en la prensa extranjera y crean un estado de debate para que la prensa institucional se vea obligada a tocar ese tema. Esa es una versión, el hecho de que esté teniendo un impacto positivo. Otra versión es que los periodistas, viendo satisfechas sus necesidades económicas y profesionales en medios alternativos, están un poco tirando la toalla en los medios estatales. ¿Crees que una contradice la otra? ¿Cómo ves esa interacción compleja?

RA21: La primera, la de que la agenda de los medios alternativos haya impactado de cierta forma la prensa estatal, eso es correcto desde mi experiencia. Incluso, desde antes que yo me graduara (2013, pero llevo vinculada al medio estatal desde el 2011 que empecé a trabajar como una trabajadora más, y a un medio alternativo desde el 2012, y después de graduarme seguí trabajado en el medio estatal y colaborando en el medio alternativo). Tocamos temas medulares de la vida diaria. Lo que sucede es que la prensa alternativa toca los temas que representan específicamente, porque la gran mayoría de esa prensa está hecha por cubanos, y quién mejor puede contar esa cuba que nosotros mismos. Y como somos periodistas, queremos hacer ese periodismo que entendemos que es el que más interesa, el que más puede hacer por este país en cuanto a formar ideologías, de crecer, de informar, de interesar y de buscar un público. Porque también, todo este sistema es un sistema competitivo que lleva a un interés económico que en este caso se traduce en el interés por el público. En ganar público y afianzar lectores. Nosotros lo vemos así desde los medios alternativos. Ahora, ¿qué ha sucedido? Desde mi experiencia, se han tocado temas medulares desde estos medios alternativos que necesariamente han tenido que tocar con su versión de los hechos en muchas ocasiones insuficientes, pero al menos lo han tocado desde los medios estatales. Ahora, esta es mi percepción de la versión número uno.

Ahora, la versión número dos, a mí me sucedió. Me sucedió que empecé con mucha fuerza en un medio estatal y de tanto que me mutilaron, tanto que me limitaron, tanto que choqué con trámites burocráticos de ese sistema implantado de modos de hacer de la prensa estatal, empecé a tirar la toalla. Nunca lo he pensado de esta forma, pero sí, llegó un momento en el que veía algo y decía, ¿para qué? Lo dejo correr. Cuando me digan, entonces lo pongo. Ahora, no creo que estos periodistas que estén trabajando en medios alternativos tiren la toalla en los medios estatales. Al contrario, me parece que esta opción de poder trabajar en medios alternativos, de poder crecer desde el punto de vista profesional, de desarrollar tu creatividad como periodista, es el que está ayudando

a que, en la prensa estatal, a que en la prensa nacional, se produzcan cambios y que cada vez más veamos otro tipo de prensa. Esa prensa que va cambiando sin prisa y con muchas pausas, pero esa posibilidad como cubano, periodista, profesional, trabajar en un medio alternativo que te desarrolle todo eso, no puedes eludir eso a la hora de hacer tu trabajo para el medio nacional. Así sea la nota de cuatro párrafos básicos. Somos muchos, de alguna manera, algunos han cambiado. Y la mutilación, esto de tirar la toalla, no sucede porque trabajes en un medio alternativo, sucede porque te mutilan, porque te limitan en el medio estatal, porque el periodista es el mismo.

Hay un gran debate dentro de los gremios de la prensa estatal, la UPEC y eso, donde se habla de dualidad ideológica y de problemas éticos. De que hay periodistas que se expresan de una forma en la prensa estatal, y de otra en el medio alternativo. Cuando tú analizas eso, te das cuenta de que el problema lo tiene el medio estatal. Porque si tú te expresas de forma diferente en el medio alternativo, es porque no te puedes expresar así en el estatal. No tiene sentido. Primero, yo estoy convencida de que en pocos países del mundo ocurre tan masivamente esta situación de que haya un periodista que trabaje para dos medios, en pocos países del mundo. Hay periodistas *freelance* que le venden la información al que mejor paga, ese es el negocio. pero hay periodistas que son parte de la plantilla de un periódico y ya, esa dualidad solamente sucede hoy en Cuba. Pregunta por qué.

Sara: Es todo un poco nuevo que empezó con los blogs, ¿verdad? Esa dualidad de la que tú hablas, de trabajar para un medio institucional y luego crear un blog con la información que tú quieras dar.

RA21: El proceso de creación de blogs no fue un proceso espontáneo. Fue un proceso impulsado desde el Partido. A ver, tuve que estudiar todo eso para mi tesis. Todas esas personas son, básicamente, de mi generación, somos los que debatimos en las fiestas con una botella de ron, una casa, una guitarra, la división del grupo. Básicamente, surgió por el interés del Partido en decir la verdad de Cuba. Esa verdad de Cuba que te expliqué hace un rato, que todo el mundo está de acuerdo. En lo que no estamos de acuerdo, es en cómo lo están dirigiendo ellos, y que al final el objetivo que perseguimos es el mismo. No hay contradicciones ideológicas grandes entre esas formas y las cosas que queremos decir. Pero bueno, el Partido quería que se dijera la verdad sobre Cuba. Potenció el acceso a internet desde las casas a los periodistas y era como un trato de palabra. Yo te voy a dar internet, pero tienes que tener tu blog, y tienes que tener tus redes sociales, ya hacer eso así y asá. ¿Qué hizo el periodista? Quería tener internet en su casa porque eso aquí en Cuba es lo más grande para el gremio periodístico. ¿Y qué hizo el periodista? No eran personas acabadas de graduar, eran personas que llevaban años en el gremio que ya estaban imbuidas de esas prácticas y esas formas de hacer. Las trasladó hacia los blogs. Pero todo no es específicamente de esta forma y tiene sus excepciones. Hubo grupos de muchachos profesionales en esa época que entendían las maneras de hacer y qué significa tener un blog personal y como tenían la posibilidad de acceder desde sus centros de trabajo se crearon sus blogs. Blogs que, en muchas ocasiones, todo el que intentó trascender ese límite de hasta que se puede decir y lo que se puede decir, hay historias. Fueron sancionados, se les retiró la cuenta.

Por lo tanto, cuando tú tienes un internet que te lo da una institución, que te lo da el trabajo, que te lo dan, hasta dónde tú puedes llegar es muy complicado. Por eso hablando con unos amigos yo decía que en Cuba no hay una blogosfera. Se une una vez al año y hace un evento en Camagüey, y la blogosfera cubana se reúne en Matanzas... No, eso como tal no es una blogosfera espontánea. De hecho, ¡si existieran blogs espontáneos, la prensa cubana estuviera sudando, sudando!

Sara: He hablado con algunos blogueros y me decían que ellos hacían campañas como espontáneas. Por ejemplo, estaba aquí este año cuando salió el tema de los perfumes de Hugo Chávez y del Che Guevara. Me decían que si pensaban que había un tema de interés público y no salía en la prensa nacional, sí que intentaban hacer una mini campaña, publicar posts y compartirlos

en las redes sociales. Pensaban que había una blogosfera en ese sentido porque se coordinaban, y se sentían capaces de alguna manera de influenciar el debate público.

RA21: Yo no estoy generalizando en el sentido de que no haya blogueros espontáneos, pero esa espontaneidad es un poco complicada. Ahora, de generar campañas sobre un tema específico, por ejemplo, cuando salieron esos perfumes, yo recuerdo que el post más grande que salió en crítica a ese tipo de perfumes y donde empezó esa campaña espontánea salió de la profesora Milena Recio, que no tiene blog, que no es bloguera.

Sara: Pero es muy activa en las redes sociales.

RA21: Pero esas campañas no salen de la blogosfera. Esas campañas salen del consenso social del equipo de amigos que solidarizan, que suman a otros. El clásico nuestro fue el primer *flashmob* cubano, que fue la Ronda para Teresita. ¿Cómo surgió la idea? Lili le dijo a Carolina, por qué no hacemos una ronda para Teresita para homenajear a la cantante cubana de nuestra infancia? Perfecto, lo puso fulana en su blog, yo hice un grupo, el otro lo puso, y cuándo nos reunimos, pero eso no salió de la blogosfera. La mitad de las personas que participaron en esa campaña no eran blogueros, y la otra mitad que tenía blog no significa que lo hicieran como blogueros, sino como ciudadanos de las redes sociales. Entonces, no significa que eso suceda así. Sí se dan buenos debates, y sí se tocan buenos temas medulares dentro de la blogosfera y sí ha sucedido que el bloguero A publica un post, y el bloguero B le responde sobre algún tema específico. Y entonces, eso genera una campaña o un estado donde responde el bloguero C, limitado al tema, hasta que se diluye. La tesis de maestría de RA20, por ejemplo, es este tema sobre cómo se dio la blogosfera y cómo eso incidió en decisiones. Su principal protagonismo lo tuvo al inicio de los blogs. Hoy, todo eso que en algún momento cuando surgió todo aquello influyó de esa forma, hoy ya yo lo veo muy diferente. Ese protagonismo que tuvo en algún momento ya hoy está más disminuido. Cada vez tenemos más acceso a las redes, entendemos que las redes no están para dar patalleta, y cuando alguien da una patalleta los demás piensan, ¿qué le pasa?

Sara: Yo sigo en Facebook algunas conversaciones de periodistas cubanos y no tienen desperdicio, más espontáneas. Igual tienes un post que genera cien comentarios.

RA21: Y el comentario no lo haces como bloguero, lo haces como ciudadano, como usuario de esas redes sociales. Y los que comentan y desarrollan un debate no lo hacen porque tengan un blog. Lo hacen porque son ciudadanos, porque les llama la atención el tema.

Sara: En ese sentido, parece que se está creando una esfera pública virtual. Recuerdo que cuando tuvo lugar la cumbre de Panamá, se preguntaba unos a otros quién estaba y quién no, y por qué no estamos nosotros representando la esfera civil cubana.

RA21: Ese es un tema complicado. Supongo que no tendrá mucho que ver con el tema de la entrevista, pero yo en mi caso sentí mucha vergüenza de los cubanos que estaban allí, de los buenos y de los malos, para decirlo rápido y mal. O sea, tanto de los que iban tanto en representación estatal, institucional cubana, como los que iban de parte de la oposición con toda la maquinación que hubo detrás de todo ese tema. Y me dio mucha vergüenza en ese momento qué podría estar pensando el mundo entero de qué cosa es Cuba, y qué cosa son los cubanos, y si esa fue la primera impresión que le diste a los demás, qué imaginará la gente lo que suceda aquí adentro entonces. Sentí mucha vergüenza. Yo tengo dos versiones del tema. Una, o toda oposición con toda su maquinación y todo el dinero que pusieron para el tema tendieron esa trampa para que Cuba quedara tan mal parada, o desde aquí se orquestó todo eso porque se sabía quiénes iban, qué iban a hacer, y hasta qué punto esas personas estaban dispuestas a llegar para armar todo ese escándalo, y todas esas discusiones públicas, y todo eso se preparó desde aquí, es decir, se sabía desde aquí. Y entonces, esa respuesta que se le dio, a la altura de ellos, me da por pensar que lo prepararon así

porque entonces no les convenía que se hablara sobre temas específicos. No les interesaba dialogar, porque a lo mejor salían cosas.

¿Tú sabes quiénes lo pagaron, y quienes lo pagaron peor? Las personas que estaban en un punto intermedio, y que no iban ni por la oposición ni por la parte estatal. Que iban realmente a hablar y a votar un tema como sociedad civil. O sucede el escándalo y caímos en la trampa, o el aparato estatal prefirió caer en la trampa porque no estuvimos dispuestos a dialogar porque a lo mejor había posibilidades de que surgieran argumentos que no tuvieran posibilidad de rebatir. Y antes de hablar y dialogar en un espacio público como ese, preferimos entonces preparar el escándalo. Porque de lo que se habló en cada una de las mesas, sobre todo en cuanto a la sociedad civil, no trascendió nada, y supuestamente de los debates que se llevaron a cabo, supuestamente.

Sara: ¿La delegación cubana decidió irse?

RA21: Se fue, entró, volvió a irse. ¡Y nos vamos de aquí porque no nos dejan entrar! ¡No nos vamos a ir porque vamos a luchar en el frente! ¿Qué esperaba yo? Que cogieran a los de la oposición y uno a uno, en un espacio público, desmontarles a ellos en el plano de la conversación, todos y cada uno de sus argumentos, y hacerlos quedar mal. Que si iban a preparar a alguien, prepararan a personas que realmente estuvieran preparadas para hacerle frente a esas personas y desmontarles esos argumentos en un diálogo. O no había personas suficientemente preparadas, o ellos no confiaban en ellos.

Sara: Si algo se manifiesta en las entrevistas es la falta de confianza en el criterio de los periodistas cubanos. Aun siendo revolucionarios, se desconfía de su capacidad para tomar decisiones profesionales.

RA21: ¿Qué le ha pasado a RA20? Yo he visto su devenir como bloguera desde que empezó. Ella sí empezó a favor de Cuba, pero siempre ha añorado la Cuba que queremos todos, y cuando lo ha planteado, lo ha planteado así. A ella le han llamado varias veces y le han querido limitar de cierta forma su expresión dentro de las redes. Hasta el punto de que en algún momento sucesos específicos que puedan haber pasado, ya no tengo esos detalles o no puedo revelarlos, ella ha dicho en su blog: voy a dejar el blog temporalmente. Te das cuenta del nivel al que puede llegar la presión. Ella puede ser un ejemplo específico del tipo de cosas que queremos todos, que solamente se atreven a expresar unos pocos y se limita. Porque a veces no se entiende, se presiona. No la pueden coger presa, no reprimen, no le dan golpes, no la botan de su centro laboral, no hacen ese tipo de cosas, pero presionan tanto hasta el punto de que uno prefiere reprimirse, autocensurarse. Desde el aparato directivo, no se entiende internet, no se entiende la blogosfera, no se entienden las redes sociales. Mi tesis, por ejemplo, era una muestra cabal de estrategias que siguieron hace cinco años para dar una visión de Cuba en redes sociales y después no funcionó, no funciona. No entienden cómo funciona. Ahora se hace un tuitazo mundial desde cuba por cualquier cosa, se convoca desde la prensa a un tuitazo mundial, cuando en Cuba hay tres gatos con Twitter. ¡Tres gatos! Para la cumbre de Panamá, cada día, se había dispuesto desde el Comité Central, una etiqueta distinta (un hashtag). Para una cumbre de cinco días. Y había dos que eran tan grandes que ya se acababa, ya no podías escribir nada. Había hasta bromas y burlas sobre el hashtag más largo del mundo. Como no lo entienden, lo ven como una camisa de fuerza, se cierran y lo ven todo a la defensiva. Me parece que este es uno de los principales problemas que tienen los directivos de la prensa en general. Como nosotros somos los de más abajo, los que más tocamos al pueblo, los que más conocemos la forma de funcionar de internet, por ahí pueden crearse ciertos choques.

Sara: ¿Cuál crees que es el papel de la prensa en una sociedad socialista revolucionaria? Si ese papel no está claro todavía, y además no entienden internet, parezca que se estén creando debates sin una estrategia clara sobre el uso de los medios y de las redes sociales.

RA21: Saque usted sus propias conclusiones. Recuerdo que me impactó un poco el día 17 de diciembre, que vinieron nuestros 5 Héroes, que Obama y Raúl anunciaron el restablecimiento de las Relaciones. Cuál fue la portada de *Granma*, de *Juventud Rebelde*, del noticiero, de todos los medios provinciales: ¡Volvieron! Y en una esquinita entonces, Cuba Estados Unidos restablecen relaciones. Yo no daba crédito a lo que estaba leyendo.

Sara: ¿Crees que eso es la culminación de cierta forma de cubrir los Cinco Héroes? A menudo, han aparecido los Cinco Héroes en portada porque se ha priorizado ese tema.

RA21: Hay temas que, en determinadas reuniones con el Comité Central se priorizan. Mandan como una especie de efeméride de temas a priorizar en la prensa al mes. Hay que priorizar la efeméride tal, y tal.

Sara: Algunos compañeros me han comentado que se dedica un espacio considerable a cubrir conmemoraciones, y ocho páginas no dejan lugar para mucho más.

RA21: Yo, como directivo de prensa, doy gracias a que haya que recurrir a conmemoraciones para llegar páginas. Porque como directivo de prensa, si lo que a mí me interesaría ver en la prensa no lo puedo hacer, mira, gracias por llenar.

Sara: El año pasado hubo un pool de tesis sobre la cobertura de los lineamientos en la prensa. Me sorprendió ver a estudiantes muy jóvenes haciendo análisis críticos delante de los directivos. En una de esas presentaciones estaba el director de *Granma* y dijo que estaba de acuerdo con los estudiantes. Y dijo: ahora vamos a analizar por qué esos ideales del periodismo no se pueden llevar a cabo, qué condicionantes tengo. E invitó a los estudiantes a ir a *Granma* a presentar sus resultados a los periodistas.

RA21: Y eso es todo lo lejos que llegan las tesis de la Facultad de Comunicación. Hay muy buenas tesis, y tesis especiales. Y no pasa nada, se quedan ahí y sirven de consulta para personas como usted, o para los que vengan el año que viene, y el que viene, y el que viene, y no pasa nada.

Sara: Pero esos estudiantes son los que llegan a los medios.

RA21: Muchos habrá tenido mi experiencia, que llegué a los medios e intenté revolucionar algo, hacer las cosas lo mejor que pudiese. En *Granma*, en *Juventud Rebelde*, ¿cuánto tú llevas en el sistema a los 30? Yo viví la experiencia de cuando yo hice mi tesis, otra muchacha hizo otra tesis sobre agendas de blogueros. Había un tronco teórico referencial que era similar para las dos, toda la historia sobre la blogosfera cubana. ¿Qué sucedió? El mismo año fuimos a trabajar al mismo medio. Ella fue a nacionales, donde la persona más joven tiene más de 40. Al año siguiente tuvimos una reunión de todo el periódico porque la redacción digital proponía que el periódico Trabajadores, que solamente hace una tirada impresa a la semana porque es un semanario, se convirtiera realmente en un medio digital de actualización diaria, y que en la semana los mejores trabajos, con la edición requerida, se pusieran en el impreso. Y esa muchacha se paró diciendo que a ella entonces no le iban a pagar doble, porque había que pagarle por el trabajo digital y por el impreso. Uno de nuestros compañeros se paró y le dijo: ‘parece mentira que tu hayas hecho esta tesis sobre este tema, con ese marco teórico, y que ahora estés pensando así. Se hace el mismo periodismo, y te toca como periodista saber darle su versión impresa’. Y es el ejemplo clásico que yo tengo de cuando te transformas sin quererlo allí, porque esa era la percepción de sus compañeros, de las personas que hace cuarenta años que están haciendo periodismo y que le dicen mira, un día tienes que escribir para la web.

Sara: Hay varios análisis académicos sobre la diferencia entre los criterios evaluativos y performativos de los periodistas, sobre cómo sus criterios ideales, muchas veces, entran en

contradicción con la práctica, porque la práctica es negociada y depende de muchos filtros. Este fenómeno no es único en Cuba, pero ¿cómo crees que esto se manifiesta en el caso de Cuba?

RA21: Lo que pasa es que es todo tan cerrado, tan cerrado. En un espacio en el que tú solamente tengas tres opciones, y o lo haces así o no lo haces, y lo que te queda es renunciar a ser periodista en tu vida, y ponerte a vender pan con papas calientes, es ahí cuando llega un momento en que me sentía ahogada. Porque o lo hago así y dejo que esa rueda de ese sistema me aplaste... Por suerte, tuve la posibilidad de venir a trabajar a un medio de este tipo, pero muchos de mis compañeros graduados en esas siete facultades no tienen esas posibilidades. Entonces, o es eso, o abandonar.

Una de las cosas que nosotros estamos esperando con mucha ansia es cuando abran el acceso a internet para todo el mundo. Nosotros hemos vaticinado en algún momento que la prensa estatal se va a quedar sin trabajadores. ¿Quiénes se quedarán? Los que tienen más de 35 o 40 años que están muy cómodos en cómo hacen las cosas. Llegan un momentico y escriben la historia de cinco párrafos que les pidieron, tienen sus fuentes....

Sara: ¿Crees que hay periodistas incómodos de todas las generaciones que quieren mejorar los medios desde dentro?

RA21: Yo no digo que ese tipo de personas no existan, pero también hay periodistas que lo hacen porque tienen internet en su casa, y porque les pagan un viaje para los Panamericanos de Toronto, o para las Olimpiadas de Londres, está ese periodista. Está el periodista que le dan un carro, está el periodista que le dan un estímulo que le dan un estímulo de 30 pesos, está el periodista que como ya te escribe de esta forma, y lo único que sabe hacer es este tipo de periodismo, no tiene cabida en los medios alternativos y no le queda otro remedio. Es complejo el entramado de todo lo que se está viviendo en el periodismo cubano, pero suceden esas cosas. Ahora, cuando todo el mundo tenga internet, cuando personas que trabajen para medios alternativos no necesiten trabajar para los medios estatales porque básicamente, en la mayoría de los casos, mantienen su vínculo con los medios estatales principalmente por el acceso a internet... Yo tenía mucho interés en hacer lo más que pudiera en la prensa estatal, lo más que pudiera, pero llegó un momento en que me rendí. Y por supuesto, pueden haber 25 que no se hayan rendido todavía. Pero yo digo, cuando estos periodistas que pueden ser un número considerable de mi generación, de mi época, tengan la posibilidad de acceder a Internet en otro lugar, trabajar como periodistas y ganarse un salario por encima de la media del país por un trabajo que te gusta, que te hace crecer profesionalmente, que no te mutila, etc. que te leen, que tienes voz propia, ¿qué te queda? ¿Para qué vas a seguir trabajando en un medio estatal? Yo tengo amigos que todavía están en un medio estatal, pero abrieron la posibilidad de Nauta y están así para atrás, para atrás, para atrás. Conversamos a veces en espacios y decimos: ¡quédate un ratito más, si al final no tienes que trabajar tanto! Por el acceso a internet.

Anécdota personal: Un amigo que tenía que trabajar para un medio estatal y para medios alternativos para pagarle la alimentación a su bebé enfermo, y lo cambiaron de redacción, le quitaron internet. Algunos periodistas que trabajan en medios alternativos pide usar pseudónimos, porque puede darse el caso de que, si su nombre sale en un artículo crítico, en su medio estatal tomen alguna acción represiva, no manifiesta directamente, sino que te digan: 'te vamos a cambiar de redacción'. Así. Entonces, está complicado.

Sara: ¿Qué crees que va a pasar con todos los debates que están teniendo lugar en el periodismo cubano? ¿Crees que van a derivar o están derivando en cambios prácticos?

RA21: Lo primero que yo creo que va a suceder, en el último debate que se hizo, el pleno nacional de la UPEC, se informó de que ya estaba como redactada o sentadas las pautas de la nueva ley de comunicación, que tengo entendido que no va a ser una ley de comunicación, sino un decreto ley (porque para hacer una ley hay que pasar por todo un proceso nacional de debate y de consenso,

pero no hay interés de que eso suceda). Va a haber un decreto ley que es impuesto, que estoy esperando a ver cuánto me beneficia o cuánto me repercute. Tengo entendido que una de las formas que se va a tratar de cierta forma es la cuestión de la exclusividad. Si trabajas para un medio estatal, firmas un contrato en el que solamente puedas trabajar para el medio estatal. por lo tanto, si trabajas para el medio alternativo estás incumpliendo el contrato. Todo es muy privado. Hay una campaña desde los principales líderes del gobierno y desde la UPEC contra el secretismo. ¿Qué va a pasar? Nada. A lo mejor ponen la ley. Primero hay que ver cuándo ponen el decreto ley. Luego, qué implica ese decreto ley sobre la base de hasta dónde puede llegar la legalidad o ilegalidad. Ahí es donde sí va a haber un cambio, en dependencia de lo que diga esa ley. Pero no se va a trabajar, ni se va a hacer un periodismo diferente en los medios estatales nacionales. No lo va a haber. ¿Sabes desde cuándo estoy oyendo esos debates? Y no sólo en la prensa, sino en veinticinco cosas más, porque hay reuniones de la CTC. ¿Sabes cuántas reuniones he tenido yo en el periódico Trabajadores para que los directivos del periódico entiendan la importancia de darle más importancia al país? Es un medio que tiene setenta trabajadores con carros, corresponsales por todo el país. ¿Sabes por qué creo que no va a cambiar, al menos en un larguísimo plazo? Porque el director que hay ahora pasó por todo un proceso hace veinte años atrás. Y ya lo que tiene aquí es todo eso de hace veinte años. Y el joven que venga va a estar envuelto en ese sistema, y el otro que venga atrás, y otro que venga atrás.

¿Cuántos pequeños pasitos, y cambios, y pasitos, deben suceder en los medios nacionales para que finalmente nosotros después de cincuenta años veamos el cambio? No va a cambiar, no va a suceder. ¿Qué va a pasar si ponen alguna ley que impida que tú trabajes en un medio estatal y en un medio alternativo? Que gran parte de los mejores periodistas que tengan esos medios estatales culminen su contrato en esos medios estatales porque pueden caer en la ilegalidad, y comenzar a trabajar en los medios alternativos. O van a hacer otra cosa. Ya yo llevo ocho años en este entramado de la prensa, desde el primer año de carrera trabajé en *Granma*, en *Juventud Rebelde*, en la Jiribilla, en un medio provincial de Cienfuegos, porque nosotros desde el primer año, cada vez que termina un semestre, tenemos que hacer prácticas en medios nacionales. Yo me preocupé por sacar buenas notas, y a esos estudiantes se les privilegia en medios nacionales. Es decir, ¡he pasado por varios medios y se pasa tanto trabajo para hacer periodismo en esos lugares por tan poca remuneración! Entonces, como ya llevo ocho años, he visto cómo se muele la forma de hacer de las personas, de los periodistas, y te digo que no va a cambiar mucho. Hay un divorcio muy grande entre lo que se da en la facultad, con profesores muy preparados, y cuando llegas a los medios. Te estoy hablando de un ejemplo de un directivo de un periódico que sale en una entrevista en televisión diciendo que internet es la nueva era del periodismo cubano, que hay que escribir para internet, y es un directivo que no revisa la página web de su periódico. Y es un directivo joven, no llega a los 40 años. Con cosas como esas no tengo muchas esperanzas. Es por eso que yo, terminando mi servicio social, mi adiestramiento, yo, y muchos más como yo, culminan su periodo y pasan a trabajar como *freelancer*, cuentapropistas, etc. que no son legales, pero tampoco son ilegales, porque hay un vacío legal ahí, y sobre esa base vamos sobreviviendo como periodistas. ¿Qué tiene un medio alternativo como en Cuba para mí? Que me permite que en mi trabajo se reconozca el puesto de Social Media o Community Manager, creativo, todos esos puestos que hacen falta hoy en un medio del siglo 21, roles que no se reconocen en la prensa nacional

RB22

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Sara: He estado leyendo el libro de Julio García Luis, ¿qué te parece el libro?

RB22: Fíjate, en el libro me parece que él sugiere, está lo dicho en las líneas, y lo dicho entre líneas. Y él, cuando analiza el debate de los intelectuales, él dice bueno, concierne sólo a los intelectuales, a los creadores, a los artistas, y en otro momento él dice algo así como algún día sabremos cuánto tenemos que agradecerles por estas protestas, por estas cosas. Porque en realidad esos debates han contribuido a mover el pensamiento en la sociedad cubana, esos debates generados en el campo de la cultura más artístico-literaria, no me gusta decir del mundo intelectual, porque nosotros también somos parte del mundo intelectual, y todos los que piensen en una sociedad, y trabajen con las palabras, con la cultura, son parte de la intelectualidad. Lo que pasa es que tú sabes que los gremios tienen sus divisiones internas, y entonces los escritores dicen, nosotros somos la intelectualidad, y los periodistas son unos barrenderos. Y entonces no, nosotros somos parte del pensamiento, yo te diría con una importancia capital, porque somos los que constantemente estamos generando debate público y liderazgo de opinión. Un libro lo pueden leer diez mil personas, un periódico circula con 200,000 ejemplares, tiene un sitio web, está en Fb, está en Twitter, y al momento tiene una repercusión enorme. Mi ejemplar de ese libro de Julio lo tengo muy subrayado, muy manoseado, porque yo creo que es el análisis más completo que se ha hecho sobre el intento de crear un modelo de prensa alternativo al modelo hegemónico capitalista, y al mismo tiempo alternativo al modelo rígido-dogmático-socialista que es típico de los países del bloque socialista soviético.

Julio hace un análisis muy bueno, muy sustancioso, desde la posición que tuvo de actor privilegiado de ese proceso porque fue periodista de base, fue dirigente del gremio, fue dirigente especializado en coberturas de alto nivel político con los más altos líderes de Cuba, fue decano de la facultad, fue uno de los primeros doctores en temas puramente de periodismo que hubo en Cuba, porque en realidad un doctorado en temas puramente de periodismo no es muy común. Pues Julio, desde esa posición, hizo un recorrido, hizo una revisión muy intensa, creo, sobre los aciertos y errores, lamentablemente más errores que aciertos, en la construcción de un modelo de prensa socialista cubano. Me parece que su obra es muy, muy significativa. De hecho, se le dio continuidad en una tesis de doctorado que ya seguro te comentaron, la de RME (intercambio informal). Su trabajo de doctorado es una continuidad al trabajo de Julio. De hecho, RM es la que le hace el prólogo, en el libro de Julio. Una excelente periodista y también gestora de proyectos periodísticos en Cuba. Es editora de *Cubadebate*, y también de *CubaSí*, un portal informativo que todavía funciona, y Rosa María estuvo en su génesis. Fue subdirectora editorial de *Juventud Rebelde*, especializada en temas de cultura digital, de la blogosfera. (Comentan sobre edad de periodistas).

Siempre, resumir sobre un asunto es complejo. Sobre todo, cuando son asuntos que no se matan. Analizar un sistema de prensa siempre requiere tener en cuenta muchas variables. El sistema de prensa cubano para mí ha sido una batalla constante de los mejores profesionales del gremio por crear un sistema de prensa alternativo a los grandes monopolios de la información y al mismo tiempo que no repita los errores de los modelos de prensa del bloque socialista, que como sabemos fueron carcomidos por la grisura, por el dogmatismo, por la función propagandística más que por la función periodística.

Cuando tú vas a los medios cubanos, hay un alto por ciento de lo que difunden que es propaganda, que no es periodismo, lamentablemente, a pesar de que hay muchos periodistas talentosos, y con vocación de hacer otra cosa. Pero como está engranada la estructura periodística del país, es muy difícil. Es un aparato estatal de prensa con una subordinación estatal política al control político del país, y se supone, o en teoría, esa subordinación política no debiera lastrar el carácter de conciencia crítica de la sociedad que deben tener los medios. Pero sí lo lastra, y sí lo impide, y sí lo frena, en la práctica.

Yo diría que el mayor acierto de la prensa cubana estos días es evitar males como el sensacionalismo en extremo, evitar que proliferen tendencias mercantilistas, que la publicidad se adueñe en los medios (de hecho, no hay publicidad oficial en medios cubanos), evitar que los medios sirvan para trampolines de influencias para guerritas intestinas entre partidos, entre facciones políticas. Creo que eso ha sido un mérito de la prensa.

Ahora, en cuanto a los errores, el principal, a mi juicio, ha sido la fuerte carga de propaganda política que han tenido esos medios, y su divorcio de buena parte de los problemas habituales de Cuba. Uno puede encontrarse en los medios cubanos análisis serios, y bastante documentados de la realidad internacional. Pero del tema Cuba, no se hace. No se hace así. Me parece que es el principal error. Ese tiene otros errores, ese tiene otros errores, implica otros, ese sería otro gran desacierto que tiene dentro otras ramas, otras subtramas.

Cuando tú vas a los medios cubanos, y trabajas en ellos habitualmente, te das cuenta de que, como pasa no solamente en Cuba, sino como pasa en otras realidades periodísticas del mundo, se ha perdido un poco la figura del reportero, de la gente esa que sale a buscar la noticia, a buscar la información, y los periodistas tienen ya un papel más pasivo de receptores de información. Sabemos que es una tendencia del periodismo a nivel mundial. O sea, la figura del reportero, del cronista, se va perdiendo, y el periodista se va convirtiendo más en un periodista de gabinete. En un periodista al que le llegan las notas de prensa de las instituciones y demás, las reelabora, las publica, pero no sale a buscar los rostros humanos de las historias. Entonces ahí hay otro gran problema.

La prensa cubana es una prensa muy golpeada por los problemas materiales. Al no autofinanciarse con publicidad y depender del financiamiento estatal, las condiciones materiales son muy malas: infraestructura, transporte, infraestructura de comunicación, de tecnologías, el propio pago a los periodistas es muy pobre, es muy deficiente. Y sabemos también que el buen periodismo es caro, cuesta. [Comenta los pagos de *El País* a los grandes columnistas españoles]. Cuando llegas a un país como Cuba, cuyo pago de colaboraciones a una gran firma literaria, llámese Leonardo Padura, o Roberto Fernández Retamar, lo que le puede ofrecer un medio de acuerdo con sus presupuestos es muy poco. Eso ha contribuido a deteriorar la presencia de grandes firmas, de grandes plumas para una columna.

Ahora, otra cosa también es la restricción, llamémosle con su nombre, la censura de varios temas. Hay temas que son casi sagrados en el país, que no se tocan, que no se abordan, como sucede también sabemos en cualquier realidad periodística mundial. Siempre hay una batalla constante del periodista por correr los límites, y de los grupos de poder (en otras partes son los grupos de poder económico, aquí es quizás el poder político) que por que los límites permanezcan donde están. La batalla es permanente, entre lo que uno puede, quiere, y sabe que es necesario que se diga en los medios, y lo que los que controlan los medios permiten que se diga en los medios.

Ha habido muchos llamamientos, ha habido quizás conciencia generalizada en el gremio, en los actores políticos, en la sociedad toda, de que el periodismo necesita cambio, necesita parecerse más a la realidad, pero en la práctica no ha sucedido, porque es que no han cambiado las condiciones estructurales en las que se desarrolla el periodismo. Es un problema estructural, no de convocar en

un discurso a que cambiemos. Sí, cambiemos, ¿pero qué condiciones tenemos para el cambio? No se puede, con los mismos... El Che tenía una frase, tenía una frase, te la cito de memoria, así más o menos, que no se puede construir el socialismo con las armas melladas del capitalismo. Claro, so tienen sus detractores, eso tiene su contraparte de quienes dicen entonces, bueno, ¿cómo lo vamos a hacer? Si lo que tenemos son esas mismas armas melladas, con ellas tenemos que construir lo que viene el futuro. [Expande sobre el Che y el nuevo hombre nuevo en Cuba]. Crear el hombre nuevo del que habla el Che es cambiar mentalidades, cambiar juicios, cambiar concepciones.

Hace más de 25 años de eso, y estamos diciendo exactamente lo mismo. Es más fácil decirlo de discurso, que llevarlo a la práctica. Nosotros no hemos podido, nosotros mismos, los periodistas cubanos, no han podido llevarlo a la práctica entre otras cosas porque no han cambiado las condiciones estructurales de la prensa. La prensa sigue siendo un aparato subordinado al poder político del país, y el poder político del país, si bien acepta hasta promueve el debate sobre estos temas y puedes encontrarte funcionarios, funcionarios del más alto nivel, hasta el presidente de la república, que te digan, sí, cómo no, es cierto hay que cambiar el periodismo, es verdad. Te dicen eso, pero al mismo tiempo no crean los mecanismos para que eso cambie. Porque su mentalidad sigue siendo la misma. Su mentalidad sigue siendo la de la prensa como un instrumento, más de propaganda, más de difusión, que de generación de criterios polémicos, de debate, de consenso social.

Yo he llegado casi a un punto en el cuál, y creo que los periodistas mayores que yo más veteranos deben estar peor, pero yo he llegado a un punto en el cuál creo que ya no se debe casi ni teorizar, ni hablar mucho más. Creo que ya hay que actuar, hay que actuar. Entonces ya cuando hoy escucho discursos de que debemos cambiar, entonces me pregunto bueno, pero eso ya lo sabemos, ya eso lo sabemos desde hace 30 años, o 40. Y no lo hemos hecho. Y no lo hemos hecho porque ahora por ejemplo estamos hablando tú y yo aquí, y ahora yo mañana te propongo que de esta conversación hagamos un artículo, que firmemos los dos y lo publiquemos en *Juventud Rebelde*, y seguramente no vamos a poder. En la práctica, los mecanismos no cambian. Y en la práctica, cuesta mucho impulsar la transformación de esa realidad mediática. Eso tiene sus derivados. Por ejemplo, ese papel instrumental de la prensa, como lo tienen los decisores políticos, también será pasado a los jefes de instituciones. Y a veces un director de empresa, o un ministro, o un viceministro de cualquier entidad, salud pública, educación transporte, cree que puede administrar la prensa. A veces no puede, pero cree que puede. Y así trata a los periodistas, así maltrata a los periodistas. Pero entonces cuando el periódico debería publicar una nota, o un comentario o algo que dijera el viceministro tal, y descaracterizarlo, y hacer una semblanza de esa actitud, pues no lo hace. No lo hace porque también los decisores políticos que controlan más o menos qué sale en los medios, son los mismos que controlan quién está o quién no está en ese viceministerio. Ahí ya hay una contradicción muy difícil. Y entonces no sale. Y ese funcionario x sigue pensando que puede hacer con la prensa lo que quiera.

De ahí surge el llamado de los periodistas a que las fuentes informativas no se cierren a la prensa, que no crean que pueden administrar el trabajo de la prensa. Se ha dicho muchas veces, pero no se lleva a la práctica. Para mí una ley puede ayudar, pero si vas a los documentos de la Unión de Periodistas.

Sara: Una de las cosas que más me ha costado entender es el hecho de que se lleve hablando sobre cambios en el periodismo cubano, al menos, desde mediados de los '80.

RB22: Años 80, años 90, años 2000. Actualmente es que se está discutiendo. Hay un grupo de trabajo con algunos de los mejores periodistas y de las mentes más lúcidas que tiene el gremio de la comunicación en sentido general para proponer una ley de prensa y comunicación, y para proponer un nuevo modelo comunicativo en Cuba, pero en la práctica creo que no ha habido la suficiente voluntad desde los decisores políticos del país para que esa ley salga adelante. Porque esa ley sería un instrumento que empoderaría a los periodistas, a los ciudadanos, en su derecho a la información.

Porque ya sabes, no hablamos solo del derecho del periodista a decir, sino del derecho del ciudadano a saber, que es otra cosa que complementa a esta y que deben estar de la mano, y el derecho de los ciudadanos a que haya transparencia en las decisiones públicas del estado.

Bueno, todo eso está sobre el tapete, pero lleva sobre el tapete años, y no acaba de concretarse. Un instrumento legal ayudaría, ayudaría mucho. Una mejora de las condiciones económicas de la prensa ayudaría mucho. Otras cuestiones, por ejemplo, una definición más clara en los dirigentes de las instituciones, del Partido político, de las distintas instancias, sobre cuál es el papel del periodismo en una sociedad ayudaría, muchísimo. Pero yo creo que nada de eso resolvería el problema. A mi juicio, se necesitan cambios radicales, sustanciales, revolucionarios, a mi juicio se necesita otra Revolución. Quizás soy demasiado hereje, por decir eso, pero a mi juicio se necesita otra Revolución que cambie estructuras.

Porque fíjate, no estamos hablando del periodismo nada más, estamos hablando de la sociedad. El periodismo es un botón de muestra de esa sociedad. La sociedad cubana necesita renovar sus métodos de participación y crear algunos que no tiene, la sociedad cubana necesita empoderar a sus minorías, y a sus mayorías, la sociedad cubana necesita lo que una vez José Saramago dijo en el aula magna, cuando vino a presentar el prólogo de *El Quijote* de una versión que se hizo en Venezuela para niños y jóvenes. Él decía ese día en el Aula Magna de la UH que la democracia es siempre un punto de partida. Decía, los que creen que llegaron ni siquiera han salido para alcanzar la democracia. La democracia es siempre un punto de partida. Bueno, pues yo creo que nosotros debemos encontrarnos con ese punto de partida.

En Cuba hoy se están debatiendo cosas que unos teme nombrarlas con ese nombre, porque suena demasiado fuerte, no, o demasiado políticamente incorrecto, pero yo creo que no se debe temer a las palabras. Estamos hablando de mecanismos democráticos. Hay que crear espacios democráticos que no ha habido hasta ahora. El gobierno cubano resultante de una revolución magnífica, que cambió la historia de América Latina, que fue en su momento el sueño de generaciones de cubanos hecho realidad, pues esa Revolución se ha ido anquilosando, se ha ido estancando en sus bases, en sus procedimientos y creo que es hora ya de una renovación radical. De una renovación que atienda ya a la realidad de hoy y que coloque las estructuras de poder en función de esa realidad en la cual los jóvenes, las mujeres, los niños, los adultos, necesitan participar. Pero participar no de decir aquí estoy, sino participar de tener capacidad de decisión real. Cuando eso suceda, cuando la sociedad completa se mire en ese espejo de participación democrática, yo creo que entonces la prensa podrá estar a la altura de ese momento. Mientras eso no suceda, creo yo que seguiremos hablando de cambiar la prensa, de volver a hacer un periodismo más audaz, más osado, más periodismo, porque en definitiva de lo que estamos hablando es de las funciones clásicas del periodismo, eso no ha cambiado.

Yo creo que el periodismo debe ser un cuarto poder. ¿Qué ha pasado en el capitalismo? Que ese cuarto poder se ha aliado con los poderes económicos, con los poderes también. De ahí que Ramonet y otros hablen la necesidad de un quinto poder, de la necesidad de un quinto poder que sería, en realidad, el rescate de la función del cuarto poder, para contrarrestar el ejecutivo, el legislativo y el judicial. Yo creo que hay que rescatar eso. De lo que Julio habla al principio del libro es de rescatar las funciones clásicas del periodismo. El periodismo es parte indispensable de la conciencia crítica de una sociedad. No podemos creernos el ombligo del mundo, y creer que somos nosotros solamente la conciencia crítica. No, los maestros, las amas de casa... Toda la sociedad genera una conciencia crítica, pero los que contribuyen a darle cauce, a viabilizar, a potenciar esa conciencia crítica, son los periodistas. Es el periodismo de la sociedad. Entonces, me parece que sí, que hay que rescatar esa función básica y limpiarla de los vicios que tiene en el capitalismo, y de los vicios que tiene en las sociedades socialistas que hemos conocido.

Sara: ¿Hasta qué punto el sentimiento de plaza sitiada ha ralentizado los cambios en el periodismo cubano?

RB22: Hay una frase de un intelectual cubano, gran literato, Cintio Vitier, que dijo que a Cuba le había tocado hacer un parlamento en una trinchera, lo cual es una gran contradicción, ¿no? Hay una paradoja. Precisamente por estar sitiada, por tener los intereses norteamericanos ahí, como una espada que pende sobre nuestras cabezas. Yo creo que eso es una realidad geopolítica, que Estados Unidos está ahí, que Estados Unidos (digo los gobernantes norteamericanos, no el pueblo). Yo creo esa es una realidad innegable geopolítica, en la que los Estados Unidos han tenido una posición de contradicción, de beligerancia y de interés y de dominio hacia Cuba. Eso está probado en los documentos; eso no tiene discusión. Pero también creo que los elementos más reaccionarios de Cuba, algunos incluso en puestos de poder a lo largo de estas décadas, han aprovechado esa realidad del interés norteamericano, de la agresividad norteamericana, para contribuir a frenar las mejores ideas de renovación en Cuba. Entonces, te puedes encontrar a varios funcionarios que digan: -No, no. Esto no podemos hacerlo porque estamos en una plaza sitiada-. ¿Sabes? La mentalidad militar de que, si el enemigo está en frente, no puede haber división aquí, no puede haber dos criterios.

Hay varias frases de Martí mal empleadas, descontextualizadas, porque Martí estaba en un contexto de guerra. Hay una frase de él que ha sido muy manipulada que dice: 'Tiene tanto el periodista de soldado'. Entonces, para algunos, eso quiere decir que el periodista es ordeno y mando. Que el periodista tiene que servir. Hay otra que dice que cuando el enemigo está enfrente, lo único que puede haber es la voz de ataque, es decir, nada de división interna aquí en las tropas, nada de polémica, de debate. No, el enemigo lo único que puede oír de nosotros es la voz de ataque. Pero Martí estaba en el siglo XIX organizando una revolución, Martí estaba preparando a un país entero para enfrentarse a tus ancestros. Martí estaba en una situación muy peculiar preparando una guerra, un partido. Hay frases de Martí muy manipuladas. Incluso he visto cosas en vallas de propaganda, frases de Martí sobre las funciones del Partido Revolucionario que creó, aplicadas al partido cubano actual. Está descontextualizado, está manipulado. Luego, hay otras frases que sí son muy buenas sobre las funciones del periodismo. Él dice algo así como que el periodismo debe ser coqueto para seducir, galán para...

Sara: Sí, esa frase la dijo RC3 en el Congreso de la UPEC.

RB22: [Recomienda unas lecturas: Diccionario de Pensamiento Martiano, de Ramiro Sánchez Galarraga]. El discurso de plaza sitiada ya me parece que es un comodín. Es un discurso que juegan algunos funcionarios y algunos decisores políticos para impedir que se genere crítica, y para ejercer sus funciones cómodamente.

Sara: ¿Qué credibilidad tienen estos argumentos?

RB22: Entre algunas personas, sí. Hay personas que son muy manipulables desde el punto de vista informativo. Y como también tienen muy poco nivel de información exterior, cuando ven que un funcionario, que una persona que les genera respeto, dice que no se puede hablar porque es un tema muy difícil, que Cuba está sitiada y que cualquier cosa que digamos la puede aprovechar el enemigo... No es menos cierto que, a veces, una cosita mínima aquí... Te cuento la anécdota que hacía un exdirector de *Juventud Rebelde* de un trabajo que salió en el periódico sobre las relaciones amorosas entre los estudiantes en el periodo de la escuela campo, un trabajo casi de entretenimiento juvenil... Y después algunas agencias publicaron: Revolución sexual en Cuba.

Sara: Pero si el objetivo es hablar mal de Cuba, ¿no lo van a hacer de todos modos?

RB22: Sí, yo creo que es ya un discurso arcaico, un discurso que no tienen ningún sustento y que, por menos con las personas de pensamiento de esta sociedad, ya ese discurso no tiene ninguna credibilidad en la manera en que se hace. Sabemos que eso tiene un componente real, que es la cercanía geográfica y político-histórica con Estados Unidos. Hay que ver el caso de México, ha historia. No es una fantasía que le arrebató más de la mitad del territorio a México, no es una fantasía que con Cuba ha tenido muchos planes de agresión, no es una fantasía que hay documentos aprobados en Estados Unidos para la subversión interna en Cuba y demás. Eso está ahí. Pero, más allá de eso, eso no puede ser la justificación para que el periodismo cubano sea chato, gris, para que no haya polémica. Y hay algunos que han esgrimido el discurso de plaza sitiada para eso. Como yo creo también que en Estados Unidos hay muchas fuerzas, muchos grupos de poder, que vociferan que haya un cambio en Cuba, pero no quieren que haya un cambio en Cuba porque ellos están viviendo de vociferar eso. Ellos están viviendo de gritar ¡Abajo el comunismo! ¡Muera Fidel Castro! Yo creo que las voces más reaccionarias en Estados Unidos y las voces más reaccionarias en Cuba son un mismo equipo: ninguno de los quieren que haya un cambio en Cuba, en el periodismo cubano, en la participación social en Cuba. Los dos quieren que las cosas permanezcan como están al estilo Gatopardo, que todo cambie para que todo siga igual.

Sara: Como periodista, ¿cómo intentas cumplir con tu responsabilidad social? Yo estoy convencida de que los periodistas cubanos lo intentan, pero ¿cómo?

RB22: Intentando todos los días correr los límites de lo posible. Si un día puedo denunciar en el periódico tres problemas, tratar de que la próxima semana pueda denunciar cuatro, y que la semana siguiente pueda denunciar diez, aunque yo sepa que hay cien problemas de los que no he podido hablar. Yo creo que uno entra en el ejercicio del periodismo con un afán romántico, muy influenciado por los periodistas de las películas que uno ve, el caso Watergate y demás, ese tipo de periodista que va a cambiar porque uno quiera, y que el mundo no va a cambiar tampoco porque uno publique un buen artículo en el periódico, eso es una utopía. Pero yo también creo que uno, a medida que se va adentrando en la profesión, y yo creo que ese es mi caso, cambia esa visión de dar las grandes batallas por ganar los pequeños combates. Yo creo que igual con lo que escriba no puedo cambiar los procesos de participación democrática en Cuba, pero sí puedo lograr que a una familia cubana le devuelvan un derecho mancillado. A una, o a dos, o a un colectivo laboral en Cuba. Por ejemplo, la sección en la que yo he trabajado desde 2008 en *Juventud Rebelde*, que es una sección de quejas de la población que fundó el periodista RD10 en 1997...

Sara: ¿Esa sección tuvo precedentes?

RB22: Sí, incluso en *Granma*. RD10 lleva desde el '97 y es un periodista formidable, una persona muy buena en su ejercicio profesional. En esa sección nosotros atendemos reclamos de la población que son muy conmovedoras. [Comenta el caso de un albañil pinareño que había edificado una casa y que las entidades estatales le debían el dinero desde 2010]. Él nos escribió, y a partir de la publicación del caso (la sección tiene el estilo de que escribes la carta y haces una reseña-comentario, es una sección periodística a partir de la carta. Yo redacté unos cuantos párrafos al respecto. Dije que era una vergüenza que el más elemental sentido de la dignidad y del deber indicaba que a ese hombre había que pagarle; que quien había sentido en su piel las llagas del cemento debía sentir vergüenza ajena al ver que a ese albañil no le habían pagado su trabajo, su esfuerzo, su tiempo. A los tres días, ya se estaban reuniendo con él las autoridades de la provincia implicadas, y a las pocas semanas ya le habían pagado su dinero. Entonces, tú dices, al menos contribuir a esta pequeña acción, a que un hombre, una familia en Cuba, sintiera que no fue pisoteado su derecho. [Comenta el caso de una doctora que vivía en un pueblito de Villa Clara, que estaba aplicando para una especialidad médica, pero por varios motivos no se la habían otorgado]. Llegaron las respuestas, porque la sección también publica las respuestas de las entidades implicadas y hasta un viceministro de salud pública nacional diciendo que no, que estaba equivocada, que a esta mujer no le correspondía. Ella siguió batallando, nos envió más cartas, las

publicamos, y un día llegó la mujer con un montón de papeles (había ido hasta la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, hasta el Parlamento) y había entregado su caso, y para no extender demasiado la historia, a la mujer le reconocieron su derecho. Cuando publiqué la última carta de ese caso, sentí una victoria, me dio emoción porque era un ser humano al que le reconocieron un derecho que no fue mancillado.

Yo he pensado que la función periodística, para uno no sentirse tan triste de que no cumple las funciones del periodista, es cambiar la mira y no pensar que uno va a revolucionar el periodismo completo, sino que va a ir ganando pequeños espacios. Cierta vez publiqué en la sección de opinión del periódico algo de una escuela en la que para ir a ver a un estudiante se necesitaba autorización del decano de la facultad (un caso de burocracia insoportable). Me contaron que en los distintos grupos se discutió el artículo, y que las autoridades de la escuela habían tomado conciencia de que había que cambiar ese mecanismo torpe. Y yo dije, ya. Por lo menos creamos conciencia en un pedacito de la gente. Es como aquella frase: el mar se salva pez a pez. Hay una fábula del niño que está recogiendo las estrellas de mar que ha dejado la marea, y pasa otra persona y le dice: en miles de playas, en miles de países, hay estrellas de mar que están muriendo. Con eso no cambias nada. Y él, en el momento en que toma una estrella y la salva, le dice: para esta, funcionó.

Sara: Comenta sobre las defensas de tesis de licenciatura en la FCOM, y las críticas de los alumnos a la prensa cubana delante de los directores de medios. El director de *Granma* les invitó a presentar los resultados.

RB22: Eso se ha hecho también en *Juventud Rebelde* en otras ocasiones. El periódico tiene una tradición de vínculo con la facultad, una relación muy fluida de intercambio (más que *Granma*).

Sara: ¿Crees que los resultados de las tesis de los alumnos pueden tener un impacto en la forma en que se ejerce periodismo en Cuba?

RB22: Sabes que el dilema academia-gremio es una pelea histórica, bizantina. Casi es como la historia del huevo y la gallina. Nunca un gremio profesional va a estar completamente en sintonía con la academia que forma a ese gremio. Pasa con la academia, pero pasa con los médicos... Imagino que habrá médicos que dirán: si quieres aprender a operar, tienes que venir y tomar el bisturí. En la prensa sucede lo mismo: hay recelos, hay contradicciones. Pero yo creo que hay un momento ahora, en los últimos cuatro o cinco años, entre la academia formadora del profesional comunicativo y el profesional. A eso han contribuido varias cosas: que se haya renovado bastante la academia con otras personas, con otras miradas. A eso ha contribuido una idea muy apoyada por Julio García Luis de que los profesionales con más experiencia, con más currículum, hicieran un doctorado en la academia. Ahí surgió una serie de doctores en Ciencias de la Comunicación que fue muy buena en el país (Francisco González, ese decano era presidente de Prensa Latina, y fue uno de los primeros que se abrazó esa idea, y fue para allá). Yo estoy seguro de que esto produjo un cambio de mentalidad, el pasar de ser un simple periodista a ser doctor en ciencias. La actual directora de la Agencia Nacional era también subdirectora de *Trabajadores* y también hizo un doctorado. La actual jefa del departamento de periodismo, en realidad ella era trabajadora de la televisión cubana, muy destacada en los informativos. Pasó por la Facultad, hizo un doctorado y fíjate que, de hecho, se quedó en la Facultad.

Estos doctorados, la renovación de la academia, la mayor comprensión desde la dirección del país (ya habrás escuchado, por ejemplo, a Díaz-Canel. Él es la voz de eso, pero si él lo expresa es porque hay consenso en la dirección del país de que es necesaria una mayor apuesta por la ciencia, por los enfoques académicos dentro de la ciencia). Todo eso ha creado un enfoque bastante proclive o abierto para que se incorporen al gremio las mejores experiencias de la academia, y para que la academia, a su vez, se nutra más de las mejores experiencias del gremio. Nosotros tenemos una cosa que nos ha funcionado bastante bien, y es que los medios se convierten en lugares de prácticas

obligatorias de los alumnos y les abre muchas puertas. Por ejemplo, yo coordino las prácticas de periodismo del primer año en la Facultad. Los estudiantes que entraron en septiembre, y que llevan sólo un semestre, en enero ya los enviamos un mes a los medios nacionales y ya empiezan a hacer trabajos periodísticos. El nexo es bueno y me parece que eso lo ha posibilitado también el hecho de que los que estamos dando clase en la Facultad no hayamos perdido nuestro nexo profesional. Yo me identifico como profesor de la Facultad, pero también como periodista de *Juventud Rebelde*, y tengo carné en los dos. Puedo identificarme con las dos cosas porque no he dejado de hacer periodismo, y la mayoría de profesores de la Facultad están vinculados a algún medio de prensa. Eso supone que nuestros puentes academia-práctica sean más fluidos. Esto posibilita que también haya más consenso sobre la necesidad de cambio. Hay consenso entre el pueblo, los periodistas, los académicos y las entidades. Todo el mundo está hablando el mismo idioma. Y un paso que facilitó el consenso fue el último Congreso de la UPEC.

Sara: Te quería preguntar qué significó ese Congreso.

RB22: Yo tengo dos visiones: una optimista y otra pesimista. La visión pesimista es que fue un congreso para decirnos, nuevamente, cosas que ya sabíamos. La visión optimista es la que ve ese congreso como el momento de mayor consenso y de mayor unidad en el gremio. Quizás, lo que uno ve en un texto de Julio García Luis del año '88 era la opinión de Julio y de algunos en el gremio, pero no era una opinión tan extendida, tan generalizada; no había tanto consenso. Sin embargo, lo que uno ve ahora en el discurso de RC3, es que hay mucho más consenso, todo el mundo está de acuerdo.

Sara: ¿Cómo es que se eligió a RC3 y a RC4 para los discursos?

RB22: Eso tiene que ver con que el presidente RD2, que fue antes director del Instituto de Periodismo, tenía conciencia de que hacía falta, no sólo una renovación del discurso desde voces tan autorizadas, sino también una renovación hasta de imagen. No podías poner a decir el mismo discurso a una persona de setenta años, aunque el propio RD2 tiene setenta y dos... Lo que pasa es que es una persona con una mentalidad bastante juvenil, y tiene esa visión de renovación. Es una persona de las que más ha luchado en este país para hacer un periodismo crítico. Quizás le pese demasiado el cargo que tiene ahora, porque es un cargo también político. Pero ha sido muy crítico y ha sido un periodista que, aunque ha ocupado muchos cargos de dirección, nunca ha abandonado las filas de abajo del periodismo. Tiene un programa de radio que se llama *Hablando claro*, que ya sólo por el título es polémico, que es una sección de cartas de la población como la que nosotros hacemos en *Juventud Rebelde* en torno a problemas de la realidad. Y lo hacen con un nivel de agudeza y buscándose problemas con ciertos funcionarios, y buscándose broncas. Pero RD2 sabía que en ese Congreso era necesario cambiar el discurso, cambiar la imagen. Son figuras que tienen también en su currículum una interesante combinación de práctica y academia, porque RC3 no ha dejado nunca tampoco de ejercer la práctica periodística, y RC4, que ha estado más vinculada a la práctica, también se ha vinculado a la docencia y, además, está haciendo un doctorado. La idea de ponerle ciencia al Periodismo, como dijo Díaz-Canel, es una idea que en el Congreso se defendió bastante.

Sara: Internet, las nuevas tecnologías digitales, el paquete... ¿Qué influencia están teniendo en el periodismo tradicional?

RB22: Para los burócratas censores de cualquier información que creen que pueden tapan el sol con un dedo, Internet y las nuevas tecnologías han sido un aguafiestas, ha sido la gran preocupación. Me decía un amigo que ahora intentar tapan la información es como intentar parar el agua con las manos. Ella se filtra, y llega, y cae. Pasa eso, esos burócratas censores de la información que creen que a las personas hay que darles todo masticado, y que tratan a veces a los públicos como niños de parvulitos que van a la escuela... Si el sol tiene manchas y yo sólo te digo que es lindo... Pues esas

personas están viviendo un gran dolor de cabeza con Internet porque la gente ya tiene mayor acceso a la información, aún en Cuba con las dificultades de acceso. Pero, aun así, la gente se pasa las cosas en memorias flash, en CD, en DVD.

Ahora, yo no creo que eso sólo pueda ser la garantía de un cambio. De hecho, creo que puede ser a veces el catalizador de cambios negativos, por ejemplo, que se pierdan los contactos humanos con la gente. Ya sabes que, a veces, las tecnologías nos aíslan. Es algo que me preocupa porque yo creo que hay que tocar a la gente, que hay que establecer nexos humanos que van más allá de un chat o de una *webcam*. Hay que tocar a la gente, hay que sentir lo que la gente siente, hay que llegar a las historias humanas detrás de la pantalla. Pero creo que hay una gran potencialidad en la democratización de la información, ese es el camino y eso es irreversible. Y en Cuba eso ha tenido un impacto. Hay cosas que hoy se publican en nuestros medios que, yo creo que, si no fuera porque la tecnología está posibilitando ese acceso más masivo a la información, ciertos funcionarios, y burócratas, y decisores no permitirían que se hablara de esos temas. Si ellos han permitido que se hable es, entre otras cosas, debido a que saben que de todas maneras esa información va a llegar a la gente por otras vías. Pasa con mucha frecuencia que primero sale en los paquetes, en los blogs, en varios lugares de información alternativa, y después llega a los medios más oficiales. Yo creo que eso es una realidad mundial, para bien y para mal, porque se presta mucho a la difusión de mentiras, a deshonar a las personas.

En estos días tuve que impartir una conferencia sobre nuevas tendencias en el periodismo y leí un documento que me gustó mucho, un teórico creo de la Universidad de Sevilla, que decía que las empresas informativas, más que fábricas, ahora eran refinerías de información, en filtros a través de los cuales, con la intervención del periodista, se refinaba lo que se daba a la gente. Los periodistas en realidad están cubriendo una función que no va a desaparecer, al contrario, que se hará más necesaria y, ojalá, más pagada. Es la función de un intelectual que te puede definir qué es lo importante. A veces, uno tiene crisis existenciales en las cuales uno dice: soy un especialista en nada. No, usted es un especialista en comunicar públicamente, y en ordenar la información pública con criterios periodísticos. Uno tiene una función muy valiosa, muy imprescindible en la sociedad en la que vivimos. Hay que refinar esa información, hay que darle a la gente algo que tribute a su formación y a también su bienestar colectivo porque, ¿para qué es el periodismo, si no es para tributar al bienestar colectivo? Si uno entra en este gremio (recuerda la frase de Kapuscinski, el periodismo no es un oficio para cínicos). Hay muchos cínicos en nuestra profesión, pero yo creo que, en general, no es un oficio para cínicos. Es un oficio en el cuál uno persigue el bienestar del otro, la creación de un clima de armonía general en el que tú puedas comer tu pan y decir tu palabra, para utilizar una frase del teórico José Ignacio López Vigil. Yo creo que ese mundo sólo es posible si hay un grupo especializado de periodistas que trabajen con la información de interés colectivo. La tecnología es y va a seguir siendo un reto fuerte, te lo dice alguien que ni siquiera está en *Facebook*. Me asusta un poco la banalización... [Comentan sobre Facebook y Twitter].

RD23

High-Ranking professor at the *Centro Martin Luther King Jr.*

Havana, 24 September 2014

RD23: Este debate sobre la prensa en Cuba viene de muy lejos, de muy lejos, pero ha tenido momentos particulares. Uno de los momentos más importantes yo creo que fue ese periodo precisamente del que estamos hablando, 86-90 que es el periodo de la 'Rectificación de Errores'. Después viene todo ese marasmo que produjo el 'Período Especial', la gran crisis económica, la amenaza cierta sobre el régimen político (toda la década de los 90 fue más o menos igual) y luego yo creo que en los 2000 comienza la 'Batalla de Ideas'. Y ahora en este momento, con este último congreso de la UPEC, yo creo que tienen un momento estelar. El congreso de la UPEC último creo que es una síntesis de lo más avanzado del pensamiento. Ahí está la tesis de RC4, el discurso de RC3, el discurso de clausura de Díaz-Canel, que no fue de clausura, que fue de apertura de un diálogo. A diferencia del discurso del congreso anterior (2008) que fue de clausura. El congreso, el que atendía la esfera ideológica del partido en ese momento era Lazo, que era el presidente de la Asamblea Nacional, y su discurso fue de clausura en el sentido literal de la palabra. Sin embargo, el de Díaz-Canel fue cerrando el congreso pero abriendo una capacidad de diálogo y de transformación que no sabemos hasta dónde pueda llegar, porque no es la primera vez que se hacen intentos en otros momentos, y siempre hay muchos factores, muchos diversos, frustran, mediatizan etc. lo que se logra. Pero yo creo que estamos en un momento de cambio muy grande a nivel de toda la sociedad, no sólo desde la prensa. Desde la economía, que es un componente clave de la sociedad, es imposible transformar la economía, decir bueno se acaba el casi monopolio absoluto del estado sobre la propiedad, y se abre un área de propiedad social y de propiedad individual, privada, con las cooperativas, con los cuentapropistas, y eso tiene un impacto social y tiene por lo tanto un impacto político. Es imposible pensar que no sea así, que no sea una cadena. Y entonces hay demandas sociales insatisfechas de mucho tiempo, pero que ahora emergen con más fuerza porque los cambios lo están exigiendo. Entonces hay que replantearse muchas cosas. Y hay muchas maneras de replantearse.

Algunos miran el horizonte que les da el pensamiento liberal tradicional, digamos, aquél que nace en la Revolución Francesa y bueno abogan por asumir un discurso de prensa que nosotros sabemos ya, se sabe en los estudios de comunicación, que más que la realidad misma de la prensa no son más que una retórica de fachada para esconder cómo de verdad funciona la prensa. Es decir, que están haciendo referencia a un paradigma que sólo existe en el discurso, no en la realidad, porque la realidad es un mundo controlado cada vez por menos empresas mediáticas, por grandes grupos que constriñen el derecho y el acceso a la comunicación de las mayorías, y entonces ese no puede ser nuestro paradigma bajo ningún sentido.

Entonces, existe otro paradigma, que no es tampoco el paradigma que de alguna manera se había heredado de la visión socialista tradicional, que es también restrictivo del derecho de la comunicación, porque es un discurso muy defensivo, muy propagandístico y muy doctrinal, la prensa para sobre todo educar, o adoctrinar o cumplir una función propagandística e ideológica, y no una prensa que tenga en primer lugar la función de informar, la función de ser una plataforma pública para el debate público, que es necesario para la sociedad, para la sanidad moral, política, societal, en el sentido general y donde también hay un espacio para la educación, para la ideología y todo eso, pero la función principal tiene que ser un modelo en lo comunicativo más participativo que sea una escuela de ciudadanía. Es decir, el derecho al ejercicio es importante no sólo porque es

un derecho más, también un derecho humano, sino porque él mismo es un constructor de ciudadanía. Es decir, es un derecho constructor de garante de los demás derechos. Porque los demás derechos están garantizados no sólo cuando está en las leyes (en la Constitución y en las leyes), no sólo cuando son parte de la cultura de las instituciones, sino la verdadera garantía de los derechos es cuando se construye ciudadanía. Es decir, una masa crítica de la población tiene pleno conocimiento de sus derechos, los ejerce, y está en posición de defenderlos. Y además, a la vez, tiene plena conciencia de sus deberes y está motivado a cumplirlos. Porque derechos y deberes tienen una interrelación. Y en la medida en que sientan que tienen derechos, estarán más motivados a ejercer y a cumplir sus deberes. No se puede pretender que la gente cumpla los deberes sin haberle otorgado plenamente los derechos. Y el modelo comunicativo participativo, que no es el liberal, ni es aquél que venía del modelo socialista, que es un pensamiento que ha emergido de las luchas más contemporáneas de los movimientos sociales, de los nuevos paradigmas de pensamiento social.

Entonces de esas luchas, de esos movimientos por la democratización de la comunicación, que han tenido mucha fuerza y mucha emergencia de los 2000 para acá, en el caso de AL, también en la cumbre de los pueblos, en el desarrollo de lo que se llama la comunicación alternativa, que ahora inclusive en algunos países como es Venezuela, en alguna medida Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, Ecuador también se convierten en políticas públicas y en legislaciones. Ahí hay un paradigma, del que Cuba tiene que, no copiar, porque eso en cada lugar es distinto, porque tiene que parecerse a la historia y a las características del lugar, y las realidades son diferentes etc, pero hay algunos hilos conductores, y andan por aquí. Entender la comunicación como derecho, entender el derecho al ejercicio de la profesión como una escuela de ciudadanía, comunicación de ciudadanía, y trabajar entonces un nuevo concepto de comunicación pública. No es comunicación estatal, sino comunicación al servicio de los diferentes sectores sociales, con plena pluralidad de voces, con una construcción de la agenda mediática negociada entre los sectores del poder. Todas esas ideas hay que repensarlas a la luz de Cuba, y tienen muchas cosas que decirnos.

Pero claro, tenemos que hacer un modelo creativo propio, un modelo ajustado a la historia, y a las características de Cuba. Porque no podemos tampoco obviar que Cuba tiene un régimen socio-político que está amenazado desde el exterior por potencia más grande del mundo, tiene como objetivo de su política reemplazar por la fuerza, o por el medio que sea el régimen. Y eso es una marca, no se puede obviar, nunca se puede obviar. Tampoco se puede convertir en una especie de pretexto permanente para no hacer cambios. Porque además sería la peor manera de defender el régimen. Partiendo de que el proyecto que anima el régimen se supone que es un proyecto emancipador, debe seguirse perfeccionando y debe ser cada vez más emancipador. Entonces la manera de que sea así, de que tenga continuidad, y continuidad en ese proyecto emancipador, me parece a mí que anda por aquí. Por el reconocimiento de esos derechos que equivocadamente se les ha dado el apodo de derechos burgueses. En realidad, son conquistas de la humanidad. Y eso se da para todos los derechos, en magnitudes distintas, y en lógicas distintas. El problema del capitalismo, y de la burguesía clásica, es que su ideario (porque las revoluciones burguesas no las hicieron sólo la burguesía, las hicieron acompañadas de otras clases, de la plebe) aunque luego ellos fueron los beneficiados. Entonces, los derechos que ellos proclamaron, proclamaron derechos parcialmente cumplidos, no pudieron nunca generalizarlos. La burguesía tiene un defecto genético, por así llamarlo, que es imposible que ella convierta los derechos que ella proclamó en derechos universales, en derechos realmente universales. Sino que son derechos siempre sesgados por la lógica del mercado y por la desigualdad que entraña el sistema. Sin embargo, cuando tú te imaginas otra alternativa al capitalismo que es emancipadora, tú no puedes decir que eso son derechos burgueses, y apartarlos. No, tú tienes que decir que eso son derechos humanos, y ahora nosotros lo que vamos a hacer es universalizar esos derechos. Además, la falsa distinción entre derechos individuales y derechos sociales, que es falsa, son dicotomías.

Y todo eso es una unidad. No puede haber un derecho individual a la expresión y a la información si tú no tienes universalizado el derecho a la educación. Porque si una población no es educada, no

podrá ejercer adecuadamente un derecho de información y de expresión. Tú no puedes defender en general los derechos que se proclaman en general para los humanos teniendo personas excluidas, prácticamente de una vida digna, de una vida realmente humana en situación de sobrevivencia, como pasa en buena parte del tercer mundo. Entonces, cualquier ideal liberador, lo que tiene que hacer es universalizar los derechos, pero en cierta lógica del discurso de izquierdas se le puso el apodo de medios burgueses y se olvidó. Igual que la división de poderes y esas cosas, que hay que retomarlas y hay que repensarlas desde una lógica distinta, que no es la lógica capitalista, pero que tampoco es la lógica dogmática, cerrada, de cierto pensamiento de izquierdas que fue dominante en la izquierda durante muchos años, y que yo creo que en el mundo está siendo reemplazada por otras visiones. Y yo creo que en Cuba tenemos que aprender de todo eso, tenemos que repensarnos, y tenemos que construir creativamente otro modelo.

Hace poco, cuando RME presentó su tesis, yo le hice la oponencia, y en la oponencia, una de las cosas que yo decía es, hay un amplio consenso en la esfera de dirección, en el sector profesional, y en amplios sectores de la ciudadanía de que el modelo comunicativo hay que cambiarlo. Ahora, hacia qué modelo y cómo hacerlo es un espacio aún de disputa, en el que estas lógicas de las que yo te estaba hablando la disputa de si es un pensamiento liberal, si es el pensamiento tradicional de la izquierda, o si es el pensamiento emergente de una nueva izquierda, cuál es el que va, y desde dónde vamos a hacer nosotros una creación propia, bebiendo de las distintas fuentes, eso está en disputa. Hoy en día lo que se está elaborando en realidad, no es una ley de prensa, ni de comunicación, sino se está elaborando en primera instancia, según tengo yo entendido, es una política pública para la comunicación del gobierno, del estado. Y ese es un paso, siempre y cuando esa política refuerce el principio de que la información es un bien público y por lo tanto refuerce la transparencia de las instituciones públicas. Estamos entonces en el modelo correcto parece ser que debe avanzar el socialismo, que es un modelo cada vez más garante del derecho a la comunicación. Y ese es un paso imprescindible, el paso de que las instituciones públicas sean transparentes. Hay indicios de que esa es la dirección. Se puede avanzar en el discurso que sobre todo ha hecho Díaz-Canel, pero ese discurso va a tener otras influencias, y probablemente se quede en un punto intermedio. Hay que ver cuánto se logra avanzar, cuánto de rémora antigua, dogmática, puede quedarse, cuánto del miedo a hacer transformaciones en la situación de acoso y de subversión que vive el país. Sin embargo, yo estoy convencido de que la mejor manera de avanzar contra la subversión es avanzando en la democratización de la comunicación. No hay otra alternativa. Hay que tomar al toro por los cuernos.

Ese es un consenso, por lo menos en el medio de la academia y del gremio profesional de los periodistas. También, una buena masa de periodistas está graduada en la Facultad. Periodistas que son profesores de la Facultad. Hay que decir que ahí se produjo una transformación muy importante del 90 al 92, de una Facultad de Periodismo a una Facultad de Comunicación Social, que acerca la comunicación más a las ciencias sociales, y da apertura al pensamiento, al debate, es menos instrumental, que en la época anterior. Yo llegué a la facultad y me encontré y un núcleo de compañeros y compañeras que tenían ya claro cómo hacer ese tránsito (él fue decano en esa época) y con los decanos me correspondió asumir el liderazgo de ese proceso, y lo hicimos. Y yo creo que eso se fue consolidando a través de los años, y aquí están los frutos. Y uno de los frutos yo creo que es eso. Los entendimientos y las relaciones muy fructíferas entre los medios y la facultad. Los medios son lugares de práctica, muchos periodistas son profesores, en la práctica y aquí, y al revés, muchos compañeros que estamos aquí también intervenimos en los medios, escribimos. Los profesores de la Facultad tenemos derecho a ser miembros de la UPEC.

Fíjate que la contradicción, es tan fuerte que en distintos momentos, incluso hay documentos elaborados por el Buró Político del Partido, que están mucho más adelante que la práctica. Entonces, la gran pregunta siempre es, ¿por qué no se han cumplido a la práctica? Yo creo que es porque hemos estado atrapados por esta doble mordaza. Por un lado, la subversión y la agresión externa, y la manera de entender cómo hay que lidiar con ella, esa es una cosa muy importante, la

mentalidad de plaza sitiada, y cómo responder al sitio... Ese es un área que ha estado siempre limitando el desarrollo de las ideas. Y por otro lado, las propias concepciones que vienen de la tradición socialista que todavía pesan mucho en la mente.

La idea de Lenin sobre la prensa, que era posiblemente muy buena y muy pertinente para la situación revolucionaria de la Rusia zarista de los años 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, pero que no tienen igual valor para la situación comunicativa del mundo de hoy que es completamente distinta en todos los aspectos globales, y además para un país como Cuba donde no es un país de una masa analfabeta como era Cuba, sino que es un país que gracias precisamente a la Revolución tiene una población altamente instruida con una alta capacidad para procesar informaciones, para producir informaciones. Había un sistema consolidado tradicional, verticalista, comercial, etc., pero que también había un alto índice de analfabetismo, y de subescolarización, y que la revolución transforma todo eso radicalmente hacia bien. Sin embargo, alguna gente cree, cada vez menos, pero hay mucha gente con poder que todavía cree eso, que aquellas ideas son válidas también para la defensa (las soviéticas), y no son válidas, son contraproducentes. Hay un peso de las dos cosas, y el atenazamiento entre esos dos factores impide que la vida, que la realidad haya estado por detrás de la teoría, e inclusive hasta del pronunciamiento teórico oficial. Así, programático oficial. Si tú lees los documentos del partido, la práctica está por detrás. Y hay discursos de Fidel que tú puedes decir, esta es la política, ahí está la política hoy.

Igual, y sigue habiéndolas (pugnas en el campo cultural y en el campo periodístico). Claro, son menos evidentes porque el campo comunicacional fue más homogéneo que el campo artístico. El campo artístico siempre ha sido más variado. El campo comunicacional ha sido como mucho más homogéneo. Nunca se ha entendido la política comunicacional como parte de la política cultural. Pero además las prácticas comunicacionales son prácticas culturales, de crear sentido, de compartir sentido, y ese es el arte, también. Muchas veces lo cultural entendido como lo artístico. Sí, en menor grado pero se daban, y se daban principalmente como insatisfacción ante las insuficiencias del sistema de información y de debate pública, tenemos una insatisfacción social.

Yo creo que también tú me haces pensar ahora en algo que antes no había pensado, que es la tradición cultural cubana (general). Siempre el escritor, el poeta, el gran pintor, el gran escultor, ha tenido una valoración social, una legitimación social mayor que el periodista. El periodista siempre fue considerado como un intelectual, pero de menor vuelo. Y por supuesto puede pesar menos la opinión, la postura de un periodista, que la postura de un intelectual.

Sara: ¿Cómo se informan los cubanos hoy en día?

RD23: La primera información que tienen los cubanos, los ciudadanos de cualquier parte del mundo, es la información que proviene de su propia experiencia, y esa es la que nadie te puede suplantar. Ahí tienen los medios un límite. Los medios no pueden ser contrafácticos, no pueden ir contra los hechos que las personas experimentan en su vida. Cuando los medios son, y tienen un discurso que está contradiciendo lo que la gente experimenta en su vida, los que se pierde es la credibilidad de los medios. Entonces, la primera fuente es nuestra propia vida, y a partir de ahí se han creado siempre en Cuba redes densas de información boca a boca, hay una de eso que dice 'radio bamba', es una metáfora para darle una corporeidad al rumor. Entonces, eso es muy intenso en Cuba. Y la vida, la experiencia de la gente da que muchas veces el rumor esté equivocado, pero que muchas [énfasis] veces el rumor es cierto, viene aquél viejo refrán de que cuando el río suena, agua lleva. Claro, eso es muy distorsionante, ese es un riesgo, pero ha sido así durante muchas, muchas décadas.

En segundo lugar, no podemos considerar nula la capacidad informativa de nuestros medios. Hay una capacidad informativa, que es insuficiente, pero no es nula. Yo creo que también hay una fuente de información en la academia, en las universidades, y de alguna manera esas fuentes de

información que siempre han estado más abiertas al mundo, aunque en un momento determinado se cerró mucho, porque en la segunda mitad de los 70 hasta los 80 la academia estuvo bajo el dogma soviético (hay que decirlo, no obstante, siempre hubo profesores y gente en la academia que se mantuvo conectado con otras partes del mundo, aunque fuera en silencio). Eso fue la base que permitió que en los 90 empezáramos a abrirnos, y no abrirnos con deslumbramiento, como pasó en el campo socialista soviético, que se deslumbraron ante lo que no conocían, no era tan desconocido, porque entre otras cosas en los 60, en los 70, los que estudiamos en la universidad en esa época, por ejemplo, yo estude en la primera mitad de los 70 psicología, y yo estudié psicología con un profesor graduado en Yale, con un profesor graduado en Lovaina. Entonces, yo estudié con libros americanos, con libros franceses, con libros belgas, y también entonces nos empezaron a entrar algunos libros soviéticos, y bebimos de distintas escuelas. Después de eso, se clausuró, y se estudiaba desde una reducidísima óptica, ocurrió en todas las carreras, pero en los '90 se desató todo aquello porque era imposible seguir repitiendo lo que decían todos esos manuales. Porque la vida los había golpeado. Pero había una masa crítica de personas, con conocimientos o antecedentes, o algunos inclusive que siguieron ahí de alguna manera, subterráneamente conectados, que ha permitido que nos abramos sin una ruptura brutal de las representaciones, por decirlo en términos de la psicología social. Sin embargo, se produjo un diálogo entre nuestra realidad, nuestras necesidades, con el mundo del pensamiento. Yo creo que la academia cubana, en general, desde la filosofía, la sociología, la psicología, la lingüística, la antropología, la comunicación, también han sido una fuente de información.

Por otra parte, como tú sabes, en el mundo de hoy no hay manera de contener la información. Aquí llegan tres millones casi de extranjeros al año, muchos cubanos han viajado y viajan, más de un millón de cubanos viven en el exterior y tienen relaciones con sus familiares... Es decir, las fuentes de comunicación por la vía del contacto personal son muy diversas. Y también han estado antes los vídeos, las memorias flash, los paquetes informativos, las cadenas de correos electrónicos (que aunque no llegan a la gran masa de la población, hacen circular información y pensamiento) y la apertura, aún insuficiente, débil que se ha producido, pero apertura al fin, de ciertos temas que se están discutiendo en la televisión, que durante muchos años fue un coto absolutamente cerrado del discurso oficial; en la prensa, donde siempre hubo algún otro espacio, y en la radio, que siempre ha sido más democrática, más plural. Sí, hay movimiento y yo creo que la gente hoy en día se informa por vías muy diversas. Yo creo que una vía de información, de contacto de los cubanos con el mundo siempre fue el cine. El ICAIC tuvo siempre una política de apertura; nunca se sometió (con Alfredo Guevara en constantes discusiones, Blas Roca, etc.) a tener una política cerrada de difusión del cine, sino que vimos nosotros cine de todo el mundo: vimos todo el cine francés, cine europeo en general, vemos mucho cine norteamericano (no tenemos ni que pagar derechos, con el bloqueo) y disfrutamos mucho del cine asiático, cine hindú, el cine coreano está entrando bastante... Es decir, hay una diversidad de miradas y yo creo que eso son fuentes de información también; de una construcción más global del mundo, en ningún caso una visión aldeana.

Sara: Entonces, ¿hasta qué punto han influido internet y las nuevas tecnologías? Porque como usted dice, antes ya había fuentes de información y vías de comunicación diversas.

RD23: Yo me acuerdo en los setenta, principios de los ochenta, era una gran preocupación. ¡Hay muchos videos! ¡La gente ve muchos videos! Sí, la gente ve muchos videos. ¿Y qué? ¡Qué bueno, no! Entonces, los *cassette* de video eran una fuente, a veces incluso con un lado negativo, porque el consumo cultural que se hace a través de los videos, hoy a través de los DVDs, puede ser un consumo muy banal; está bien, ese es el lado negativo. Pero siempre, eso es preferible a la asepsia, a pretender una asepsia que termina siendo un dogma, y que termina siendo, por lo tanto, una desconexión con la realidad y un empobrecimiento del pensamiento. Es preferible que haya el peligro de que el pensamiento sufra por banalidad, por esa banalidad que viene del mundo comercial. Es un peligro, pero yo creo que con pensamiento crítico, con educación, hay maneras mejores de lidiar con ese peligro que con el peligro del cierre, con el peligro del encapsulamiento

del pensamiento, porque eso sí es empobrecimiento total; ahí no hay pensamiento crítico, ahí se cierra el ciclo. La hegemonía nunca es total, ya eso lo explicó Gramsci muy bien explicado. Pero yo prefiero el peligro de que lleguen mensajes que no son edificantes, de que llegue una dosis de banalidad. Se ha criticado mucho la banalidad. Yo considero que el exceso de banalidad es nocivo; también creo que una pequeña dosis de banalidad es necesaria para equilibrar la vida. Cada cuál sabrá cuál es la dosis de banalidad que puede admitir, o que le gusta, o que prefiere. Cuando digo pensamiento crítico, no me adscribo a la idea de algunos de pensamiento crítico como pensamiento muy estructurado y que rechaza lo que no entra en la estructura. No, ese no es un pensamiento crítico, ese es un pensamiento dogmático. Yo creo que pensamiento crítico es la capacidad de discernir, es decir, cómo yo puedo contactar cualquier cosa, y yo tengo la capacidad de entender cuánto eso me puede beneficiar o me puede perjudicar; cuánto eso puede favorecer o no favorecer; cuánto de eso yo puedo poner al alcance de mis hijos, y cuánto no. Pero sabiendo que la diversidad es importante, sabiendo que la pluralidad es decisiva para formar esa propia capacidad de discernimiento. No puedes tener una persona con capacidad de discernimiento a partir de un solo discurso, a partir de una sola doctrina.

La doctrina termina desconectada de la realidad y, por lo tanto, no te conduce a ninguna parte; y termina con una ruptura total. Eso lo describió muy bien la psicología social francesa; todas las teorías de las representaciones sociales, cómo se produce una la ruptura de las representaciones. Y es cuando el núcleo de la representación, que es conceptual, que es de creencias, de valores, se desconecta de las prácticas. Cuando la práctica está ahí, y es más fuerte que todo, llega un momento que no te permite entender aquello. ¿Y qué termina ocurriendo? Que aquello se bota; se rompe y se bota.

Sara: ¿Y ha habido peligro de que eso pase en Cuba?

RD23: Yo sé de personas a las que les ha sucedido, que eran unos comisarios políticos y después se convirtieron en todo lo contrario. Y he conocido a ateos que después son místicos; también he conocido a místicos que después se hacen ateos. Es decir, conozco; no es un problema de teoría. A escala masiva no ha ocurrido, pero puede ocurrir si alguien pretende mantener un discurso que esté desconectado de la realidad. Puede ocurrir una ruptura brutal de las representaciones sociales a escala masiva, y eso ocurrió en Europa del Este y en la Unión Soviética.

Sara: ¿Por eso el periodismo cubano tiene que cambiar?

RD23: Tiene que cambiar. No sólo el periodismo cubano, el pensamiento. Los modelos de pensamiento, la manera de hacer política, tiene que avanzar hacia la real participación. Que, en primer lugar, es cumplir lo que dicen las leyes cubanas, la constitución cubana, sobre participación. Ese sería el primer capítulo, y el más importante. Luego, podríamos estudiar si hay que cambiarlas, modificarlas... Yo creo que tiene que haber espacio para cualquier debate. Pero el primer capítulo, es decir: Mira, vamos a cumplir lo que dicen nuestras leyes en materia de participación real, que no ocurre, y en eso puede ayudar muchísimo una política de comunicación. Y una legislación de comunicación. Que yo creo que hace falta una política pública, no sólo para regular la comunicación extra oficial, sino para regular el sistema de comunicación en general y regularlo en el sentido de hacerlo más democrático, de hacerlo más participativo, no más restrictivo.

Sara: ¿Cree que hay miedo a hablar sobre más participación?

RD23: Hay miedo, hay mucho miedo. A ver, quienes están haciendo los cambios son los mismos que hicieron todo el proceso anterior y, por mucho que su pensamiento avance, hay ciertas ataduras, hay ciertos límites. Pero, por otra parte, también, no pienses tú que esa ideología está sólo en un grupo dirigente; eso atraviesa a toda la sociedad cubana. Entonces, yo creo que también, muchas veces, estos eufemismos son palabras de transición para que las personas no vean un rompimiento

muy grande con lo que ha sido hasta ahora, sino que vean los lazos de continuidad, que realmente existen. Entonces, se usan muchas veces palabras intermedias. Por ejemplo, aquí se le llama cuentapropismo a todo emprendimiento privado. Sin embargo, hay una diferencia entre el trabajador autónomo, el carpintero, el albañil, o el plomero, que da un servicio a la comunidad, al microempresario que tiene cinco empleados con él. Sin embargo, aquí todo lo echamos en el mismo saco porque todavía no se quiere hablar de microempresas privadas, e inclusive están metiendo en el sindicato a empleadores y a empleados (me parece una aberración, en el sindicato tienen que estar los empleados, no el empleador porque, si no, ¿cómo los empleados se defienden del empleador?). Bueno, el código de trabajo nuevo ha dejado eso más o menos claro, la cuestión del empleador y del empleado. Pero a ese empleador entonces hay que considerarlo entonces un propietario de una empresa pequeña, un microempresario (y no tan pequeñas empresas, porque van creciendo) y eso va a tener un límite por definición, por redistribución de la riqueza, eso va a tener 'cuotas'. Algunos dicen que las cuotas están muy bajitas todavía, pero va a tener cuotas. Tampoco es que vaya a haber una mafia enriquecida, o no la queremos por lo menos, como ocurrió en Rusia; que vuelva a ser una oligarquía, como ocurrió en Ucrania, una oligarquía que suplantó al poder y vuelva a ser la vuelta atrás. Ese es un escenario posible, pero no es el deseable por la mayoría de cubanas y cubanos. El camino parece que es otro.

Sara: En los ochenta había todo un debate la pluralidad de ideas, sobre la apertura de ideas; un debate que también veo en el presente. Luego, en los noventa se introdujo todo el debate sobre la apertura económica, que también se ve hoy en día. ¿En qué se parecen, y en qué se diferencian esos dos momentos históricos?

RD23: Hay una línea de continuidad y una línea de ruptura. Hay una continuidad porque la mayoría de los problemas persisten; la manera de abordar esos problemas es lo que ha ido cambiando. Muchas de las ideas que hoy están en los lineamientos de 'Actualización del Modelo Económico' son ideas que están presente desde los años ochenta, y ahora se llevan a la práctica. La posibilidad de que hubiera cooperativas en diferentes sectores, yo la vengo escuchando desde los años ochenta, pero parecía una cosa muy remota, medio ajena al sistema. Pero bueno, ahí estaba la idea. Eso ocurre siempre con las ideas: empiezan en el margen, y terminan después estando en el centro. A veces las cooptan, y a veces la idea reemplaza a la otra idea que fue antes dominante. Yo creo que sí, que hay un nuevo modelo que aún es insuficiente, que hay un espacio de disputa de modelos y que coincide, además, con un momento muy delicado, que es el momento de la transición generacional de la cúpula del gobierno. Hay una transición ahí, la autoridad simbólica que tiene la generación que sale no es heredable, esa autoridad no es heredable. Entonces, la nueva dirección tendrá que enfrentarse a un escenario (como todas estas disputas van a estar así, irresueltas) y ellos no van a contar con el capital simbólico. Yo creo que la preparación principal tiene que estar no solamente en la dirección que forma cuadros, como se llaman aquí (yo creo que lo mejor sería decir servidores públicos, sería un concepto mucho más socialista y democrático) y, por otro lado, la más importante línea es la de formar ciudadanos. Ahí es donde tiene que estar; el poder ese simbólico hay que convertirlo en un poder real de la ciudadanía, no de los que dirigen, para que de verdad se garantice la continuidad de un proyecto emancipador, porque si no, cualquier cúpula puede revertir el proceso, ¿me explico? E incluso puede usar a una masa no construida como ciudadanos, es decir, puede usar esa masa a favor de cualquier causa que pueda ser el retorno de una oligarquía al poder y el retroceso de las conquistas históricas.

Esos son escenarios posibles, no deseables, pero hay que tener sentido de la realidad; eso puede ocurrir. Por eso hay que apostar mucho, insistir en el concepto de formar ciudadanía, que en mi opinión es la garantía. Hay una frase de Fidel que decía: 'El partido es la garantía de la continuidad histórica'. Yo creo que no, la garantía de la continuidad histórica de la Revolución está en una ciudadanía consciente en construir eso que llamamos un ciudadano, una persona que conoce, ejerce y defiende sus derechos, que está motivada a cumplir con sus deberes. Eso en el marco de nuestra constitución y de nuestras leyes, que son la herencia de la Revolución, la herencia más permanente

de la Revolución: los derechos que ha adquirido la gente. Muchas veces los adquirió como ideal, como proclama, pero no como vida cotidiana. El llevar eso a la vida cotidiana es lo que permite formar ciudadanía, y eso para mí esa es la continuidad de la Revolución posible.

Sara: Leyendo la prensa me da la sensación de que ha habido un esfuerzo intencional de educar a las masas como trabajadores, pero no como ciudadanos.

RD23: Falta. Hay ideas, incluso, yo diría que el núcleo duro de esas ideas está presente, pero falta desarrollarlas. Lo que sigue primando es la idea de que el jefe, el cuadro, es el que va a decidir. Es una idea muy soviética, realmente, y también es una idea de la propia Revolución cubana. Hay un trabajo muy temprano del Che que se llama 'El cuadro, columna vertebral de la Revolución'. Es decir, son ideas que han estado muy presentes. Yo creo que hay que ir a suplantar la idea de cuadro político, o cuadro técnico, por la de servidor público. Es decir, un cuadro que en un periodo determinado está sirviendo en instituciones públicas; que esa no es su carrera, porque la idea de cuadro profesional, para mí es una aberración. No puede haber un profesional que sea siempre... es como la idea del gerente, ¿no? Es una idea gerencial, dan vueltas por todos lados y fracasan en muchos lugares. Pero la idea de servidor público no puede ser como la idea del gerente empresarial; tiene que ser la idea de servidor público, hay que diferenciar entre gerente y servidor público. Por cierto, el gerente cubano tampoco puede ser igual que el gerente capitalista, él tiene que tener una capacidad de diálogo con su colectivo trabajador porque las leyes establecen que los trabajadores forman parte de la dirección de la empresa, y él debe tenerlos en cuenta; pero eso es más discurso que realidad, eso hay que construirlo más en la práctica que como es realmente. Hay que hacerlo cumplir, y eso es una relación entre práctica y reflexión teórica.

Sara: Lo mismo me decían sobre el contexto de la comunicación, que todo iría mejor si se cumplieran las recomendaciones del buró político.

RD23: Claro, el código de ética y todas esas cosas.

RC24

Editor at *Granma*

Havana, 31 July 2014

Sara: La entrevista abre con una introducción a su trayectoria profesional.

RC24: Me gradué en el '88, en la Universidad de la Habana. Sí, la profesora Rayza es amiga mía.

Yo empecé [a trabajar] en el año '88, en un periódico militar que se llamaba *Bastión* que ya no existe. Después estuve un año en Etiopía, de corresponsal de guerra. Bueno, después pasé por más lugares, y después estuve en *Bohemia* seis meses, un periódico de la provincia de Cienfuegos que se llama *Cinco de Septiembre*, un año. Después en la *Agencia de Información Nacional*, del 91 al 97, seis años. Después fue subdirector de *Tribuna de la Habana* hasta el 2000. Del 2000 al 2013 en *Juventud Rebelde*, yo fui subdirector primero, y después director. Y voy a cumplir un año en *Granma*, así que he estado en bastantes lugares.

Sara: Me gustaría que repasara su carrera durante estos últimos años, ya que se incorporó al periodismo en pleno proceso de 'Rectificación de Errores', momento en el que se debatía sobre un cambio en el periodismo cubano.

RC24: Yo como periodista en particular, mientras trabajé en *Bohemia* y trabajé en el *Cinco de Septiembre*, el periódico de Cienfuegos, puede hacer un periodismo... no crítico, a mí no me gusta llamarle crítico. Un periodismo investigativo de problemas que tuviera la sociedad. Yo lo pude hacer en esos dos medios, lo que pasa es que estuve muy corto tiempo. Y ya cuando trabajé en la Agencia de Información Nacional su perfil y corte editorial no es precisamente ese tipo de periodismo. Es una agencia de noticias que tiene sus funciones muy específicas. Y en esa época era difícil, aunque yo hice algunos trabajos, sobre todo publicados en *Tribuna de la Habana*, sobre problemas que tenía la sociedad. Pero no era la línea editorial fundamental de la agencia de noticias. Y ya cuando llegué a *Tribuna*, yo creo que sí. Podrías examinar ese periodo de *Tribuna* en el que yo fui subdirector, y luego director, que vas a ver un conjunto de trabajos muy interesantes sobre problemas sociales. Del '97 al '2000 más o menos, que hay trabajos que incluso fueron premiados en concursos del país, y otros de alta incidencia pública. Que recuerde, uno que hicimos de la cervecera, la (¿?) y todos esos problemas. Sí, había un colectivo de trabajo muy... y se podían hacer ese tipo de reportajes investigativos, o se podían hacer... y se hacen, trabajos sobre problemas que tuviera la sociedad. Fue una etapa en *Tribuna* en la que sí que se podía hacer.

Ya en *Juventud Rebelde*, bueno, es un medio nacional con otro alcance, con otra edición. Hay periodos interesantes en *Juventud Rebelde*, que podrían ayudarte los libros. Hay dos libros. ¿Los tienes? En esa etapa yo era subdirector editorial del periódico. Yo creo que ahí hay un reflejo de un tipo de periodismo diferente dentro de Cuba. A partir de 2006. Desde el 2006 se hicieron trabajos muy interesantes sobre el periodismo, sobre cosas de la sociedad. Nos metimos en muchos problemas que tenía la sociedad, y creo que eso fue una ventana dentro del periodismo cubano que se abrió para poder airear algunos problemas que tenía la sociedad. En ese periodo en que yo fui subdirector del periódico, fue a partir del 2000. Y bueno a partir del 2009 hay incluso otros trabajos que están publicados de otros problemas sociales. Y es una tradición que en *Juventud Rebelde* ha habido por etapas. Unas etapas mejor, otras menos. Todo depende de las circunstancias, de los periodistas que tienes, la propia sociedad, cómo está evolucionando.

Y en *Granma* llevo nada más un año. Podrías revisarlo también. Se han hecho algunos trabajos, creo, de ese corte del que tú estás preguntando. Con mucho impacto en la sociedad. Incluso algunos han cambiado políticas en el país. Del equipo de cocción, no sé si te lo leíste. Bueno, tienes que buscarlo, ese fue en febrero, en febrero de este año, me parece. Fue un reportaje sobre los equipos de cocción que cambió la política de cómo el país iba a tratar la cocción de alimentos. Yo creo que se están haciendo cosas. Lo que me parece es que se pueden hacer más. Y que todavía hoy no está a la altura de lo que los lectores nos solicitan.

En ese momento de la grabación (minuto 5.48), llaman a la puerta y la investigadora pausa la grabación. Al retomarla, no lo hace correctamente. Por lo tanto, hay una parte de la entrevista que no es grabada.

(A continuación aparecen las notas que tomó la investigadora, aunque no es posible ofrecer una transcripción exhaustiva ni exacta. Por lo tanto, estas notas no se utilizarán como cita directa. Usted puede editar, completar o borrar estas notas con total libertad, y entregar la copia resultante a la investigadora.)

Cada quince días, más o menos, RC24 actualiza su blog *Cibereditor*, fruto de una necesidad de debatir sobre ciertos aspectos del periodismo digital (por ejemplo, el debate sobre la desaparición de los periódicos en papel). El blog fue creado durante su maestría en 2009, y no se mete en temas políticos.

Hoy en día se están produciendo una serie de cambios económicos que producirán necesariamente cambios en la superestructura.

Factores que influyen la cobertura del periódico:

Lo que influye la cobertura periodística es la relación entre el periodismo cubano y la lealtad, que a veces produce una confusión entre lealtad y falta de crítica, o entre lealtad y falta de debate.

Los factores económicos y la infraestructura también están afectando la cobertura periodística.

La profesionalidad, el vacío generacional. RC24 es el único periodista de su generación en *Granma*, donde la mayoría de los periodistas pertenecen ya sea a la generación histórica, o son muy jóvenes.

La falta de una cultura comunicacional.

El síndrome de plaza sitiada, que ha sido sobredimensionado.

El hecho de que *Granma* sea el periódico oficial del Partido y del gobierno.

El acceso limitado a nuevas tecnologías que, según RC24, ahora están influyendo en la agenda mediática del periódico. 'Hoy ya todo se sabe'.

RC24 considera que la prensa cubana tiene varias virtudes.

En primer lugar, se trata de una prensa comprometida con los intereses del pueblo, que es al que sirve.

Según el entrevistado, la gente necesita un espacio de legitimación a través de la prensa, sin que mande el mercado.

Los profesionales mantienen su lealtad.

La prensa cubana ofrece una mirada a toda la sociedad cubana en su diversidad.

La prensa cubana se rige por valores humanos, no mercantiles.

Según RC24, la prensa cubana debería ser una prensa que proporcione un debate constante; una prensa dinámica, alegre, polémica, capaz de contrastar y de expresar problemas. Una prensa capaz de autofinanciarse, ya que se necesitan cambios estructurales en la economía de la prensa. Además, se necesita una ley de comunicación que regule las relaciones entre los periodistas y las fuentes, y entre éstos y las instituciones.

(Más adelante hay otra pausa, y la investigadora retoma la grabación de nuevo. Los fragmentos que aparecen a continuación son, por lo tanto, una transcripción exacta de la conversación.)

Sara: Las defensas de tesis de alumnos de la Facultad de Comunicación, UH, que han estudiado la cobertura que del proceso de ‘Actualización del Modelo Económico’ en *Granma* y de *Juventud Rebelde*, son muy interesantes. En una de las defensas, usted estaba en el público e invitó a los alumnos a venir aquí a *Granma* a presentar sus resultados. ¿Cómo fue ese intercambio?

RC24: Y vinieron, y vinieron. Es muy interesante, porque fíjate. La academia siempre te aporta una mirada científica de lo que es el asunto que tú vas a tocar. Yo defiendo que la academia estudie más los procesos comunicativos del país. Yo he estado defendiendo eso a la máxima expresión. Y ese ejercicio que hicieron los muchachos, que es un ejercicio académico y científico siempre hiperboliza un poquito más de lo que es. Porque es la aspiración a..., el deber ser, que se llama, el cómo deben ser las cosas. Y una cosa también es la realidad, y lo que media esa realidad. Uno debería también sacar la cuenta entre ese deber ser y la realidad. Cómo tú vas acercando esos dos procesos. Y por eso a mí me pareció interesante ir a ese, y aparte yo sí que fue a ver varias tesis de la facultad, porque yo lo veo como necesario, yo no lo veo como crítico. Y yo creo que, que los muchachos lo digan así, es importante porque supongo que cuando lleguen a las redacciones puedan hacer lo mismo [entendido como lo mismo que recomiendan en las tesis]. Lo que ha pasado históricamente no ha sido eso. Es que dicen una cosa ahí y después cuando llegan a la redacción empiezan a tropezar primero con un grupo de las cosas que te he dicho, y se cansan rápido. A veces me da esa impresión, que algunos muchachos se cansan rápido. Y eso me preocupa. No quiero decir estos que tú conociste lo hagan, pero a veces me choca. Entonces, la verdad es que he estado siguiendo las cosas y algunas cosas las hemos estado aplicando.

Sara: ¿Por ejemplo?

RC24: A ver... Por ejemplo, los muchachos señalan muchas veces que en la ‘Actualización del Modelo Económico’ la mirada nada más es desde las instituciones. El reportaje que yo te recomendé que te leyeras es eso, es que está hecho desde antes de las tesis. Yo me siento con los periodistas y les digo, las noticias están en la calle. Olvídense de las fuentes. –No, porque fulano no quiere hablar. –¿Y? Pero, ¿no hay un problema? ¿No hay un problema x en la sociedad? Vete y búscalo, y vamos a reflejarlo. Y ponemos al final que fulano no quiso hablar. Ah, eso lo hemos hecho en dos o tres reportajes, no en todos. Porque tú no encuentras, primero, el profesional, la calidad profesional que pueda hacer eso. A veces, porque tienen un comprometimiento muy fuerte con la fuente y entonces les da pena comprometer a la fuente. ¿Sabes de lo que estoy hablando? Es decir, hay otro grupo de factores que también median esa manera de hacer las cosas. Pero les he dicho: Háganlo. Y les dije, lo que me están criticando aquí, vamos a hacerlo. ¿Qué nos lo impide, hacerlo? Eso es un proceso que demora tiempo. No se hace en dos días, en tres días. Es un proceso que te va llevando, poco a poco. Poco a poco, con el tiempo, tú vas creando una cultura profesional

de... bueno, vamos a meternos en este rollo, vamos a hacerlo de una manera... Depende también de la calidad profesional que tienes. Más formado, menos formado.

Pero yo creo que se han hecho cosas. Nosotros hemos ido haciendo cosas antes de las tesis, después de las tesis, en la mirada que tú tienes de cómo tú reflejas la 'Actualización' de los lineamientos. Porque a veces nos quedamos nada más en la información de la Gaceta Oficial, la información que dan a los periodistas en la conferencia periodística. Ahora, ¿ustedes van a una conferencia de prensa? Increpen a los funcionarios. Ahí están reflejados. Algunas salen mejor, otras peor. Nos preparamos antes. Póngame una pregunta, dígame qué va a preguntar y yo les pongo preguntas. Pregunten esto, esto y esto. Háganme el favor, pregúntele al funcionario. ¿Que salen de dónde? De los propios lectores, que me escriben y me dicen: -Oiga, a eso que usted ha publicado le falta esto, esto y esto. El lector es muy exigente. Tú construyes esa agenda pública desde la agenda mediática. A veces lo logras, y a veces no lo logras, pero para mí es un ejercicio muy interesante. Y yo creo que es importante que se tome en cuenta lo que hace la Facultad para acercarse a la realidad de los medios. Aunque hay una parte que tú no puedes aplicar por la realidad objetiva. Tú a veces quieres hacer algo y no tienes carro para ir. O a veces quieres hacer algo y eso forma parte de una política que el país está estudiando, y entonces te dicen: -Mira, espera, porque estamos estudiándolo, y vamos a cambiarlo, porque nos metimos cuarenta y pico años sin cambiarlo, y ahora vamos a cambiarlo. Entonces, uno tiene también que hacer esas alianzas, esas maneras de... Pero para mí, muy interesante que los estudiantes lo digan, y lo digan de la manera en que lo dicen. Si nos pasan la mano, o el plan de estudios, no funciona eso.

Sara: Y para terminar ya. Todos esos condicionantes que afectan la cobertura de los medios y hacen que ésta, como usted ha dicho, no pueda ser ideal. Esos condicionantes, ¿permiten que la prensa cumpla con su responsabilidad social?

RC24: Yo diría que, en un por ciento alto, sí. Y hay un por ciento que no la cumple. Hay un por ciento en que la función social del periodista no se puede cumplir, lamentablemente, porque está influenciado por esos factores. Pero hay un por ciento importante que sí. Cuando hay un periodista, un buen profesional, que quiera meterse en un tema, porque se puede meter desde diferentes géneros. No sé si tú has seguido *Granma* en los últimos días. Nos metimos con el tema del paquete famoso. Bueno, mira, eso es periodismo, y ese fue uno de los mejores periodistas que tengo yo aquí en el periódico. Lo llamé y le dije: -Mira, si te vas a meter, métete a fondo con el paquete. El tema de los perfumes, pero nosotros habíamos hablado ya del tema de los símbolos. Hace quince días (RB25), la jefa de información, dile que te enseñe su trabajo de los símbolos. Es decir, hay temas de la sociedad que yo creo que nosotros hemos tocado. Y a veces los hemos tocado... Mira, hoy, ¿quieres un tema más complejo que este? Ahora cuando tú te vayas te lees esto, que es uno de los temas más complejos de la sociedad cubana, que es el tema de los peloteros cubanos en las grandes ligas. Aquí está un análisis de por qué a los peloteros cubanos no los pueden contratar en grandes ligas, porque el bloqueo no lo permite. Yo le decía el otro día al que escribió esto, Oscarito, es el subdirector del periódico. Yo quisiera tener todos los días en *Granma* o un artículo, o un reportaje, o una entrevista o algo que mueva la opinión. Vete a la web a ver. Hay un debate abundante en la red sobre este tipo. Bueno, se pueden hacer cosas, entonces. Aquí está. Ah, que no lo hacemos todos los días con la profundidad, con la seriedad, a veces con todos los elementos.

Bueno, depende, repito, de muchos factores. De factores profesionales, y de factores externos al medio. Pero en el año que llevo ya (llevaré un año en octubre) he tratado de quitarle un estigma a *Granma*, que creo que se lo he ido quitando poco a poco. Que es el medio más aburrido de Cuba y el medio donde nadie discute nada. Eso a mí no me lo pueden decir. Primero, porque el medio ha publicado durante esta etapa muchos trabajos complejos que han movido la sociedad. Yo creo que la sección de cartas a la dirección. Publicamos el viernes pasado un resumen de quién nos responde. Son maneras también de expresar el periodismo, o de enjuiciar a la sociedad. Mira, tú el organismo tal no me respondiste al periódico, te lo hago público. O hablando con el ministro de Turismo me

dijo: -Tengo una (¿miel?) y tú tienes una (¿miel?). Porque eso forma parte de la función social del periodismo que tú me decías, que hay que verla en su realidad, no hay que ver al periodista individual. Hay que ver al periodista insertado en sus medios. Y yo creo que el medio ha hecho un esfuerzo por reflejar esa dinámica de la sociedad.

Le falta. Lo que pasa es que el tramo recorrido es mucho más corto que el tramo a recorrer en esta batalla que tenemos nosotros. Si me preguntas, yo creo que se puede lograr.

Sara: Hay voluntad profesional, eso me consta. ¿Hay voluntad política, también?

RC24: De la más alta dirección política, hay una voluntad grandísima. Donde yo creo que puede estar fallando es en esos profesionales de hacerlo como deben hacerlo, y en los políticos, y en los que no son los políticos, coadyuvar todo eso. Pero yo creo que nosotros como medio tenemos que empujar mucho. ¿En qué sentido? En que si no hay toda la voluntad, diríamos, de alguna de las partes a lograr eso que queremos, hay que empujarlo, hay que buscarle salida, diríamos, de alguna manera. Y es lo que yo estoy tratando de hacer. No sé si lo voy a lograr, porque no sé cuánto tiempo voy a ser director de *Granma*. Lo que se está haciendo ahora en la web de *Granma*, nadie se imaginaba que en la web de *Granma* se pudiera publicar un comentario que estuviera contra lo mismo que se dice en el país. Eso nadie se lo imaginó. Sin embargo, desde el 14 de marzo, en *Granma* usted opina. Con la moderación que hacen todos los medios. Reinventamos las coletillas. ¿Has leído las coletillas? La coletilla es la manera en que el medio deja fijada su posición con la respuesta al organismo. En *Juventud Rebelde* se hacía de una manera. Aquí en *Granma*, cuando yo llegué, dije: vamos a hacerla de otra. Yo te pongo la respuesta tuya y te digo: mira, la respuesta esa está mal, esto está mal, esto está mal. Como yo lo veo. Como una manera también de expresión, como tú me decías, profesional. Hay muchas vías, lo que tenemos que hacer también es lograrlo. Yo veo el vaso medio lleno. Si tú ves el vaso medio vacío, sabes a lo que me estoy refiriendo, es el pesimismo. Yo lo veo siempre medio lleno, que es una manera optimista de ver la vida y de apreciar los fenómenos. ¿Qué pasa mucho trabajo uno? Es verdad. Yo paso mucho trabajo, esto es un sacrificio. Es verdad, yo me voy todas las noches aquí... Pero bueno, esta es la profesión que escogí. Ser periodista es lo que me gusta, y lo que disfruto. Pero se pueden hacer muchas cosas, yo creo que se pueden hacer muchas cosas.

RB25

Editor at *Granma*

Havana, 25 July 2014

Sara: ¿Cuáles son, desde tu punto de vista, las principales virtudes y deficiencias del periodismo cubano?

RB25: Bueno, como lectora de *Granma*, porque llevo ocho meses... Como lectora de *Granma* y receptora en general de la prensa cubana, yo creo que entre las virtudes de la prensa cubana está la seriedad con la que se asume el oficio. Hablo de la seriedad en el sentido de buscar siempre los acontecimientos más relevantes, de no mentir, de quizás, que no es lo común en otras partes del mundo. La prensa cubana está bastante alejada de la prensa rosa, de la prensa roja, de la prensa amarilla, y en ese sentido hay mucha seriedad en asumir la profesión, el compromiso social que tiene la prensa con el país, con la sociedad, con la gente. Y creo que ese es uno de los grandes méritos que tiene el periodismo cubano. Se lo ha ganado durante muchos años, y a pesar de las dificultades que tiene, ha sido también lo que ha permitido que el pueblo confíe todavía en sus medios. A pesar de que se sabe que cada vez hay menos personas, en el caso específico de la prensa escrita, que leen periódicos (sobre todo cada vez menos jóvenes leen los periódicos). A pesar de la pérdida de credibilidad que pueda haber sucedido en algún momento determinado.

Ese es uno de los méritos que tiene. Yo creo que otros es que los méritos que tiene es que los profesionales que se han ido incorporando con los años al ejercicio del periodismo son personas de muy alta calificación. La Universidad nuestra ha ido logrando durante los años alcanzar niveles superiores en la preparación de los futuros profesionales de periodismo. No ocurre en Cuba como quizás ocurre en otras partes del mundo, donde se incorpora mucha gente a partir de la inclinación, de la vocación, y van aprendiendo el oficio. Yo creo que el periodismo es profesión y es oficio, tiene de las dos cosas. Esa alta calificación con la que egresan los periodistas, y también el plan de superación profesional que ha logrado la Universidad, que ha permitido que un grupo importante de periodistas tengan una categoría científica, que sean máster, que sean doctores. Eso también es una cuestión que también tiene el periodismo a su favor.

Esas ventajas que puedo mencionar tienen, cuando vienes a ver, su repercusión en las partes malas. ¿Qué problemas tiene el periodismo cubano? El periodismo cubano tiene el problema de que es aburrido. No lo digo yo, se ha dicho durante varios años. Esa misma seriedad que hemos querido imprimirle a todo. Esa misma responsabilidad social con la que hemos querido asumirlo todo. Ese constante apelar al modelo de la impersonalidad, muchas veces en el mensaje, ha hecho que el periodismo se haya convertido, en determinados momentos, en un periodismo aburrido. Y eso tiene repercusión en el público, que viendo los mismos temas y no viendo creatividad en el abordaje de éstos, al ver similitud en el lenguaje que se emplea, un lenguaje quizás más formal, más preestablecido.... Entonces se aleja también del mensaje, de la esencia de lo que se quiere transmitir en los medios.

Por otro lado, la preparación académica y profesional todavía no ha logrado tener su acompañamiento desde el punto de vista práctico. Los periodistas nuestros que se gradúan, a pesar de que todos los años hacen dos meses de prácticas, un mes en cada semestre, eso no es suficiente. Cuando se llega a la realidad de un medio de prensa, sea radio, prensa escrita o televisión, uno se siente desprotegido. Te estoy hablando ya desde la experiencia personal. Desprotegido en el sentido

de que tienes que lidiar con muchas cosas por primera vez, y la academia no te prepara lo suficiente para ello. Uno no tiene ese roce con la práctica, con las fuentes, con el tratamiento de las políticas editoriales de un medio. No lo tiene lo suficiente durante el transcurso de la especialidad. Y cuando llega a los medio, uno siente en cierta medida que está empezando de cero. Desde el punto de vista científico, uno tiene determinadas nociones sobre cómo debería ser el periodismo que entonces chocan mucho, a veces, con la realidad.

Otro problema que tiene el periodismo cubano es su relación con las fuentes a partir, creo yo, de cómo ha sido diseñado el sistema de medios de prensa en Cuba. Esa es una cuestión que hoy está en estudio, que se está hablando de una ley de comunicación para establecer límites, regulaciones. Que pueden decir hasta dónde es competencia de un organismo determinado cerrar una fuente informativa o no. Ese es un problema muy serio para el periodismo cubano hoy. Se ha tratado en los diferentes congresos de la organización gremial, que es la UPEC. En el más reciente se trató con mucha fuerza el tema del secretismo, pero todavía es un problema no resuelto. Y es un problema no resuelto, además, porque esa misma seriedad de la que hablábamos ahorita...

Por ejemplo, en cualquier parte del mundo es lícito para un medio de prensa decir “fuentes no acreditadas o fuentes que no quisieron darse a conocer dijeron tal cosa”; y no ha pasado nada. Pero los medios cubanos no hacen eso. Partimos del principio de que las fuentes tienen que dar la cara, de que si vamos a dar una noticia tiene que estar debidamente comprobada, contrastada. Lo que es para mí una cosa digna de elogio, puede convertirse en un lastre en un momento determinado. El código de ética que rige la organización gremial a la que prácticamente todos los periodistas pertenecemos (es una cosa voluntaria y no todos los periodistas pertenecen, pero la gran mayoría sí) tiene un código de ética muy estricto, muy fuerte. Si usted como fuente me da una información y me dice que esa información no puedo publicarla, no puedo hacerlo. Es decir, el mismo código de ética nuestro nos amarra en un momento determinado. Te obliga a buscar fuentes de información que no siempre están disponibles, para tratar de no citarla. Y lo otro es que usted, como periodista, siempre tiene el deber de proteger a sus fuentes.

Por ejemplo, hemos tratado temas que son espinosos, porque revelan inefficiencias, negligencias de grupos de personas, comportamientos incluso que pueden derivar en una investigación para llegar a cuestiones criminales, policiales y demás. Se nos ha pedido en ese caso revelar fuentes, y es complicado porque nosotros no podemos revelar las fuentes de nuestro trabajo. Sí existe, lo que sucede es que los medios cubanos tratan por todos los medios de no llegar a esa situación extrema. No es común que te veas enredado en un trabajo periodístico que te obligue a proteger tus fuentes a toda costa, porque tratamos siempre de evitar vernos en ese terreno de arenas movedizas. A veces tienes una información muy buena delante, que puedes trabajarla, que quieres trabajarla, que quieres sacarla antes que otros, y la fuente no está dispuesta. Y no tienes otra que te pueda validar eso, y entonces te quedas huérfano. No puedes usar esos recursos que en otras partes del mundo, y que son lícitos.

Entre esa organización del sistema medios de prensa que te comentaba, hay otra cuestión. *Granma* es el órgano oficial del Comité Central de Partido. Por tanto, lo que se publique en *Granma*, la gente la interpreta como la opinión del Partido. Es decir, no es la opinión del periódico, no es la opinión del periodista, es la opinión del Partido. Aunque el partido no sepa ni siquiera que eso se va a publicar el día siguiente. Eso, de cierto de modo también, condiciona la forma en que las fuentes hablan con el medio. Nos ha sucedido otros medios han llegado a cierta información, y cuando hemos llegado nosotros nos han dicho que no, que para *Granma* no, porque saben la implicación que puede tener que eso se publique en *Granma*.

Cómo está organizado el sistema de medios cubanos, y la relación con las fuentes, son cosas que lastran hoy el periodismo cubano. Te mencionaba el tema de lo aburrido, que tiene que ver con el lenguaje, que tiene que ver con la reiteración de un grupo de temas que responde a esa organización

misma de los medios. Es decir, nosotros, como órgano oficial del Partido, tenemos un grupo de temas que son interés del Partido abordarse y que nosotros, bueno, no importa que sea un tema que haya sido abordado tres veces, porque si es interés del Partido, tiene que haber una cuarta y una quinta. Aunque eso no siempre esté en correspondencia con lo que periodísticamente sea más saludable para el medio y para el periodismo.

Sara: Estaba hablando con una editora de *Juventud Rebelde*, y me contaba que estaba pidiendo que los periodistas cubrieran el 26 de Julio de una manera innovadora. No sé si sucede lo mismo en *Granma*.

RB25: Estamos celebrando el 61 aniversario del 26 de julio. Realmente, cincuenta y cinco desde que se celebra como tal. Y son cincuenta y cinco años trabajando el tema en la prensa. Cuando te das cuenta, cincuenta y cinco años, y tiras el periódico para atrás, qué de nuevo puedo decir yo sobre estos acontecimientos. Cuando ya la mayor parte de las historias han sido contadas, cuando muchos de los protagonistas de esas acciones no están vivos. Es muy difícil en ocasiones ser creativo, no ser reiterativo, no ser aburrido con temas que se reiteran. Entonces podría decir, ¿por qué trabajar el 26 de Julio? Pero es que el 26 de Julio es un acontecimiento importante para este país, para el pueblo. Y, además, hay nuevas generaciones que vienen surgiendo. Uno diría, ¿por qué tengo que recordar lo que pasó un 26 de Julio si históricamente es algo que se estudia en las escuelas? Pero el periódico también cumple una función desde el punto de vista ideológico y hay nuevas generaciones que no vivieron esos momentos. Son situaciones difíciles, es complejo, pero son con las que tenemos que lidiar todos los días.

Sara: ¿Qué crees que ha hecho la prensa cubana por la Revolución, y cuál crees que debería ser su papel en el momento actual?

RB25: Yo creo que lo más importante, y te estoy hablando desde mis conocimientos limitados de la prensa cubana. Porque hay muchas cosas que no conozco y venir a *Granma* ha significado para mí encontrarme con mucha gente que ha hecho la historia de ese periodismo, porque en *Granma* está todavía en la redacción Martha Rojas, que fue la que cubrió el juicio del Moncada, una persona que ha transitado por los diferentes momentos de la Revolución y aquí, en este periódico. Y con ella y con los compañeros que están aquí uno va aprendiendo muchas cosas de diferentes, etapas históricas, cómo se vivieron desde la redacción del periódico, y es muy interesante.

Creo que la prensa cubana lo principal que le ha aportado a la Revolución es que ha ayudado a consolidar la unidad, a consolidar esa fe en el proyecto que es la Revolución y la construcción del socialismo. La prensa ha sido, en este sentido, un soldado de las ideas importantísimos para el proyecto revolucionario, desde los primeros momentos. Si uno ve, por ejemplo, los periódicos *Hoy* y *Revolución*, desde los primeros años desde el '59 para acá, te das cuenta de cómo se fueron reflejando los principales acontecimientos. Fidel, como líder de la Revolución, siempre vio en los medios de comunicación una manera de estar en contacto directo con el pueblo. Sobre todo, en intervenciones en la televisión que a veces se extendían por horas. Pero era la manera que él encontró para explicarle al pueblo los cambios que iban sucediendo. Por qué iban sucediendo. Y cuando digo la televisión, la prensa hacía sus reseñas, la gente lo guardaba, lo podía consultar.

Fue muy importante el papel de la prensa en esos primeros años para reflejar todas las cosas que estaban ocurriendo en el país y lograr conformar una unidad ideológica en torno a ese proceso renovador que ha sido la Revolución en todos esos años, pero sobre todo en esos años iniciales donde había tantas tendencias políticas distintas, donde había tanta gente con confusiones, con ideas diferentes. Porque mucha gente se sumó a la lucha contra la tiranía de Batista, pero no sabían cuál era el proyecto revolucionario. Desconocían la *Historia me Absolverá* como base que estructuró las primeras reformas y leyes que tomó la Revolución. El papel de la prensa en eso fue decisivo, y ha

sido decisivo después en los períodos de resistencia que ha tenido que vivir el país, lo fue en los años '90.

Yo tuve la posibilidad, para un trabajo que tuve que hacer hace poco, de leer muchos periódicos de los años '93 y '94. Y es muy interesante, a pesar de cómo se redujeron los espacios, porque se redujo la tirada de muchos periódicos, se cambió de sábana a tabloide, se redujeron los días de salida, el número de páginas... Tantas cosas ocurrieron tras la crisis económica que se vivió tras la caída del campo económico y de la URSS, que es muy interesante ver también la manera en que se fueron reflejando esos años. Había un cierto equilibrio, por un lado, de resaltar los logros que se iban consiguiendo, que eran con mucho sacrificio. Y por otro lado, de tratar de explicar un poco las nuevas medidas que fueron tomadas en esos años para tratar de sacar al país adelante. Y la prensa en ese momento fue muy importante para la resistencia, para que el país pudiera mantener la Revolución y el proyecto socialistas a pesar de la agudísima crisis que vivió en esos instantes.

¿Cuál sería hoy para mí el papel de los medios y de la prensa en Cuba? Sobre todo, el de reflejar cuáles son los problemas que tenemos hoy, y llevar un poco la mirada hacia las dificultades que tenemos hoy y que lastiman el proyecto social que nosotros hemos defendido durante todos estos años. Creo que la mejor contribución que puede hacer la prensa hoy a la Revolución y a la construcción del socialismo no es, solamente, el reflejar los buenos momentos y las cuestiones positivas (que es importante, porque hay generaciones que vienen surgiendo, y hay cuestiones de la historia y del país que hay que continuar explicándolas y hay que continuar diciéndolas). Pero creo que el mayor aporte estará en reflejar cuándo una política determinada se desvía del curso de lo que nosotros queremos para nuestro país, y que queremos como sociedad, como pueblo. Cuándo se cometen errores que pueden llegar a lastimar la credibilidad del proyecto social que se defiende. Creo que ese es el mejor aporte que puede hacer la prensa hoy. El ser una especie de alerta, de vigilante, de guía. Lograr ese canal comunicativo entre el pueblo y la dirección del país, de la dirección de la Revolución. Porque muchas veces hay diferentes mecanismos, diferentes organismos, hay estructuras gubernamentales diseñadas para eso. Pero el papel de la prensa es muy importante para que la gente pueda tener voz, pueda expresar sus criterios, sus opiniones, y que éstos lleguen a las más altas esferas del gobierno y se conozcan. Es ese canal, esa especie de alerta, de cómo estamos viviendo hoy, hasta qué punto se están logrando las cosas que queremos, y las cosas que no queremos.

Sara: Estaba leyendo una tesis de licenciatura sobre las cartas de los lectores a la dirección de *Granma*. ¿Es esa una de las medidas que el periódico ha tomado para acercarse a los lectores?

RB25: Es interesante, porque *Granma* ha buscado la manera de que no aparezca lo que es común en esas secciones, es que aparezcan las quejas que tiene la población. La gente acude mucho a los medios como un recurso que encuentran cuando les cierran muchas puertas, cuando no los escuchan. Pero también es una muestra de la confianza que hay en los medios de prensa y en su poder de influencia para que las cosas se resuelvan. Es interesante lo que hizo *Granma* desde el 2009 con las cartas porque no se limitó solamente a publicar el problema que podía existir con una persona o con una comunidad en específico, sino que también ha publicado criterios, opiniones de la gente en torno a diferentes asuntos de la vida del país, análisis incluso.

Este es un país que tiene un alto nivel de instrucción y lo ha ido alcanzando a través de los años, precisamente con la obra de la Revolución. Primero, con la campaña de Alfabetización y con todo lo que ha hecho después. Independientemente de las fallas que haya habido en un momento determinado, como el déficit de maestros que hubo en un punto determinado, que obligó a tomar ciertas medidas, y cosas que se han ido resintiendo en el sistema educacional. El Sistema educacional cubano es un sistema fuerte y con alcance internacional, con un alto nivel de instrucción. Entonces, es muy fácil encontrarse con una persona en la calle que, quizás por su apariencia, o por su edad, o digamos porque se desempeña en un negocio particular, usted no tiene

noción de cuál es el nivel de instrucción de esa persona, y la capacidad de análisis que tiene. Y esta sección ha dado la posibilidad de que esas personas expresen sus opiniones sobre diferentes tópicos de la vida del país, y con un nivel de seriedad y de profundidad muy interesante. Y no es la voz de un periodista, sino la voz del pueblo también hablando sobre esos acontecimientos. Y eso es un punto muy interesante dentro de las cartas de *Granma*, pero no es lo único en lo cual ha trabajado el periódico para tratar de hacer ese trabajo que le corresponde actualmente.

¿Qué ha hecho *Granma* que yo considere que se corresponde con su papel actual? Por diferentes razones, que tienen que ver con algunas de las que ya he mencionado, con que *Granma* se toma como la opinión del Partido, y eso tiene sus implicaciones. Pero también porque *Granma* ha sufrido en los últimos años, me han explicado... Entran muchos jóvenes recién graduados, y se van. Hay un vacío generacional en los periodistas de la redacción de *Granma*, sobre todo en la de nacionales, que es el corazón. Es lo que la gente más siente y, en este tema es, en la que más puede aportar. Entran jóvenes con un nivel de preparación teórica muy elevado, pero en la práctica tienen que formarse. Cuando más o menos logras formar a uno de estos jóvenes, se va. Se van para otros medios, porque el nivel de exigencia es menor. Se van para desempeñar otras profesiones porque lo que ha sucedido en el país, no es solamente con el periodismo, hay muchos profesionales que se gradúan de una cosa para desempeñarse en otra por una cuestión de un mayor beneficio económico.

Eso a *Granma* lo ha golpeado mucho. Las redacciones nuestras son de gente muy joven. En la redacción internacional, por ejemplo, el jefe de redacción tiene 26 años, solo dos años de graduado. Es un muchacho muy inteligente, pero toda la gente que tiene a su alrededor son tan jóvenes como él, con excepción de un periodista que es de la vieja guardia, pero además es una diferencia generacional muy grande (estamos hablando de una persona de casi setenta años con jóvenes de veintiséis, de veinticinco). Te das cuenta de que hay un vacío muy grande, y por mucha inteligencia que tengas esos muchos, por mucha preparación que tengan, por mucho esfuerzo que hagan, hay mucho *background* que incorporar al ejercicio de la profesión. Puse el ejemplo de internacionales para no hablar de la mía. La mía está en las mismas condiciones. Yo entré aquí hace 8 meses. Yo entré tras nueve años ejerciendo el periodismo y soy la jefa de esta redacción. ¿Quiénes son las personas que yo tengo en mi redacción? Casi todos son jóvenes que van a cumplir su primer año de graduados en el mes de septiembre. Entonces, desconocen muchas cosas del funcionamiento, de lo elemental. Si estoy atendiendo temas que tienen que ver con la economía, yo tengo que estudiar economía. Y la práctica diaria en un periódico que, además, es diario, les roba mucho tiempo de prepararse. Y al no tener una guía al lado, un periodista de más experiencia que les pueda ir pasando esa experiencia, no es lo mismo que lo vayas adquiriendo a fuerza de práctica, de chocar con él, a que otro te vaya guiando en ese proceso. Y ellos han estado muy solos en ese proceso de aprendizaje, precisamente por ese vacío generacional que te mencionaba.

Sara: ¿Qué pasó en las generaciones entre esos periodistas muy jóvenes y esos tan mayores?

RB25: En medio ha pasado lo que te comentaba. Hubo quienes entraron a *Granma*, hicieron una trayectoria determinada, y después se fueron para otros espacios por razones personales, por razones económicas, porque fueron para otros medios porque creyeron que iban a realizarse profesionalmente mejor en otros medios... Todo eso le ha sucedido a *Granma*. La expresión concreta de eso está en una desprofesionalización en cierta medida, y eso ha limitado el trabajo que se ha hecho. Mencionaba este asunto porque eso ha hecho que quizás el reflejo de los asuntos más acuciantes que le tocan al país, la manera en que se han abordado, no haya tenido una estabilidad en la presencia en la redacción de *Granma*. Que a veces los trabajos se limiten a una información sobre determinados asuntos y no a reportajes interpretativos, no a la opinión, no a un grupo de otros elementos que podrían ayudar más al país y satisfacer un poco más las necesidades del público.

Sara: Dicen en *Juventud Rebelde* que siempre han hecho un periodismo diferente que *Granma*, ¿qué pasa con *Granma*?

RB25: *Granma* no ha hecho eso. En los últimos tiempos, lo que *Granma* ha tratado de hacer es este tipo de trabajos periodísticos que llevan implícitos un mayor trabajo de investigación y de profundización en los temas. En el tiempo que llevo yo aquí, que coincidentemente es el mismo tiempo que lleva el director de *Granma*, que era el de *Juventud Rebelde*...

Sara: ¿Por qué no ocurrió diferente, de *Granma* a *Juventud Rebelde*?

RB25: Sí, tiene lógica. Estamos hablando de trata de traer la frescura del periódico de la juventud al periódico del Partido, y buscar otras maneras de hacer y de reflejarlo. Y eso ha tenido su reflejo en el periódico a partir de la publicación de un grupo de reportajes que tratan de investigar un poco más en determinadas aristas, en determinados temas. Ahí, nosotros, en lo que tiene que ver con la ‘Actualización del Modelo Económico’ cubano, con el momento que vive el país... Ahí se han abordado el asunto de la comercialización agropecuaria. Por ejemplo, cuando se implementó una nueva medida que era la de facilitar los créditos para los equipos de cocción, *Granma* hizo un reportaje sobre este asunto y rebeló lo mal que se había aplicado la medida, y eso le costó a algunos funcionarios sanciones y determinadas cosas. Fue un reportaje que obligó a hacer un segundo trabajo, e incluso una respuesta tercera donde se reflejaban las medidas. Se han hecho varios trabajos que tienen que ver con las medidas que se han aplicado en la ‘Actualización del Modelo Económico’ cubano.

Por ejemplo, otras cosas que en *Granma* no se hacían y que se están haciendo actualmente tienen que ver con las coletillas. También en la sección de las cartas, en las mismas respuestas que dan los organismos a las cartas. Hace muchos años en Cuba surgió la coletilla con otros propósitos para demostrar la inconformidad que tenían los periodistas con la política del medio en aquellos casos. Y ahora nosotros la estamos empleando para reflejar la inconformidad que tiene el periódico con las respuestas que se dan a la población. Porque al final son funcionarios, son entidades, son empresas que están dando una respuesta a la población sobre asuntos que a la población le preocupan, y que muchas veces son respuestas vacías, que están llenas de palabras técnicas y cuestiones administrativas, que al final no resuelven los problemas. Esa ha sido una manera que el periódico ha buscado para reflejar eso.

La aparición de la sección de comentarios que no existía como tal en *Granma*, una página de opinión. Hace aproximadamente ocho meses que está saliendo en la página tres de los viernes. A veces varía, en dependencia de los contenidos, pero principalmente en la página tres de los viernes, que es la página de opinión.

Te mencionaba el tema de los reportajes porque es significativo también el tipo de diferentes temas que se han tratado. Puedes buscarlos en las doble páginas de los viernes, las páginas cuatro-cinco. Sobre todo, esos reportajes de la doble página de los viernes y la página dieciséis, que también responde a esas decisiones. Y sobre todo, buscar la manera de salir de ese periodismo aburrido. Usted puede decir cosas serias, pero de un modo interesante llamativo, atractivo. Ahí han aparecido tabloides informativos en determinadas coyunturas especiales, como fueron el Festival de Cine, el Mundial de Fútbol, el festival *Cubadisco*, la Feria del Libro, la Cumbre de la CELAC... Que generaron materiales informativos que, desde el punto de vista de la gráfica, del diseño, ya tienen otra factura, tienen otra realización. Se ha buscado la manera de insertar más la infografía, de darle otro protagonismo a la imagen.

En *Granma*, normalmente, hay mucho texto y pocas imágenes. Por lo general, las imágenes son muy planas y no dicen mucho desde el punto de vista de la fotografía. No son fotografías expresivas, digamos, no tienen la fuerza de un primer plano, de un detalle en cierto momento. Es muchas veces una fotografía informativa de apoyo. Es decir, estoy diciendo que se inauguró tal cosa y ves a la gente cortando la cinta cuando pudieras poner otra cosa que dé información también,

y que no sea la gente para acompañar, sino la foto para dar información. Es ir insertando poco a poco ese tipo de elementos en *Granma* para introducir una nueva dinámica, y eso no se hace en dos días ni depende solo de los periodistas. Además de eso, vamos a pensar que solamente dependiera de los periodistas. Eso necesitaría un cambio en las actitudes, en las ideologías profesionales, en los modos de actuación de la gente, y eso no se logra en dos días.

Es interesante para nosotros cómo la página web de Grama, que era una de las más atrasadas desde todos los puntos de vista, nada que ver con los cánones que hay en el mundo, y a partir de marzo de este año navega un sitio nuevo con la posibilidad de que la gente comente las notas de *Granma*. Eso fue una revolución, que la gente pudiera en el órgano oficial del Partido expresar sus opiniones, muchas veces en desacuerdo con las cosas que aparecen publicadas. Hemos buscado la manera también de que eso se refleje en el papel a partir de muchas entrevistas on-line que hacemos. Las buscamos y hacemos una versión para el periódico impreso. Es una manera también porque sabemos que no todo el público puede interactuar con la página web, y es una manera de llegar a quienes no tienen acceso a Internet, ni a la Intranet, en muchos casos.

Te decía que esa posibilidad de interacción que da la web hoy, hemos intentado llevarla al papel impreso porque no todo el pueblo cubano tiene acceso a Internet o a Intranet. Esas entrevistas on-line donde los funcionarios responden las preguntas que hacen los internautas, por ejemplo. Muchas de esas preguntas se las está haciendo el pueblo, y no tienen la posibilidad de hacerlas. Entonces nosotros lo que hacemos es una especie de resumen de lo más significativo de lo que se pregunta y se responde, y llevarlo al periódico impreso como una manera también de satisfacer esas necesidades informativas que tiene la población de interactuar con ellos.

Creo que el periódico *Granma* está viviendo un momento en el que poco a poco se va transformando. En el futuro no muy lejano también se transformará desde el punto de vista visual, porque el nuevo diseño del periódico *Granma* está casi a punto, y el periódico lo necesita.

Sara: ¿Cómo va a ser ese diseño?

RB25: Bueno, es un diseño que respeta la marca de hace muchos años. Lo están haciendo jóvenes graduados del Instituto Superior de Diseño, respetando muchos elementos de *Granma* como marca, como una cuestión que está en la mente del lector cubano, pero trata de acercarse a la modernidad. Eso va a representar otro cambio para nosotros los redactores, porque hoy de la manera en la que está estructurado todo el sistema de trabajo y nuestras rutinas productivas se privilegia mucho el texto en lugar de la gráfica, a pesar de los esfuerzos porque la gráfica también tenga un mayor peso en el periódico. Pero se piensa el periódico como un todo: lo que dice, cómo lo dice, y cómo mostro eso al público para que le llegue de una mejor manera.

Se está buscando una revolución en los contenidos, en la visualidad y en la forma en que esos contenidos le llegan a los lectores de *Granma*. Se están haciendo cosas que en *Granma* no se hacían desde hace muchos años: un estudio de lectoría. Nosotros necesitamos saber quiénes nos leen, qué buscan quienes nos leen. Eso se está haciendo ahora. Lleva la publicación próxima encuestas en el periódico para que nos lleguen; se han hechos grupos focales en diferentes provincias; encuestas en diferentes provincias. Es decir, hay unas fases que se cumplen en ese estudio de lectoría y que nos darán información importantísima para poder trazar ese camino que nos hemos propuesto. Porque lo que queremos es que el papel que tiene asignado históricamente *Granma* lo pueda cumplir bien, y tiene que hablarle más directamente a la gente, tiene que volverse ese canal de comunicación entre el Partido, el gobierno y la población.

Tiene que servirle a la población, a las autoridades del país para saber cómo piensa la gente, para alertar sobre lo que está mal. Y para ello, tenemos que buscar todas las maneras posibles de perfeccionar nuestro trabajo con todas las limitaciones que te mencionaba, que son muchas. A

veces, las puertas se nos cierran. Muchas veces nuestros periodistas no tienen la garra que se necesita para sacar determinada información, aunque la fuente se te cierre. Es la limitación de que, mientras los demás pueden decir con entera libertad usando los mecanismos que existen, nosotros tenemos la limitación de que respetamos una manera de hacer periodismo, y de que además somos el órgano oficial del Partido. Y eso impone algunos temas dentro de la agenda, eso impone algunas veces cierto modo de enfocar asuntos porque se toma como la opinión oficial del Partido, y eso condiciona un poco el periodismo.

Sara: ¿Crees que algún día dejará de ser el órgano oficial?

RB25: No creo que *Granma* deje de ser el órgano oficial del Partido. Lo que sí pudiera suceder es que otros medios de prensa que también son órganos del partido, digamos los provinciales (cada provincia de este país tiene un periódico y ese periódico es el órgano oficial del Comité Provincial del Partido). El Partido en Cuba es uno solo. Es la opinión de muchos periodistas que es suficiente que haya un solo órgano oficial del Partido. El resto de los periódicos no tendrían por qué serlo, independientemente de que el periodismo cubano haya defendido la línea de la Revolución y que continúe defendiéndola. No tiene por qué existir en el futuro toda esa cantidad de periódicos que sean órganos oficiales del Partido, por decir periódicos.

Granma no va a dejar de serlo. En el mundo ocurre muchas veces, sobre todo en la experiencia socialista del mundo, aunque sea muy disímil, que siempre hay una voz oficial, y *Granma* es esa voz oficial. Creo que es válido que la tenga, que sea, que exista, pero *Juventud Rebelde* no tiene por qué regirse por los mismos puntos, por los mismos cánones que *Granma*. Porque *Juventud Rebelde* tiene otros públicos, otra misión. Aunque en la raíz esté la visión del periodismo como servicio social común para todos, no tienen por qué tener la misma línea, ni por qué decir lo mismo. La gente critica mucho cuando la portada de *Granma* y la de *Juventud Rebelde* son iguales. Critica mucho que se reflejen los mismos asuntos cuando lo que dijo *Granma* no tiene que ser lo mismo que dice *Juventud Rebelde*. Eso muchas veces pasa por el mecanismo que te explicaba, por cómo están estructurados los medios en Cuba, que muchas veces pasan como indicaciones de cosas que no deberían ser así. Eso creo que puede cambiar en el futuro, pero hoy en *Granma* no es el caso.

Sara: Te preguntaba porque hay un debate sobre el papel del periodismo en Cuba, sobre todo a partir de la publicación del libro de Julio García Luis, y del último Congreso de la UPEC. Hay muchos debates sobre el exceso de regulación externa de la prensa.

RB25: No creo que el problema de profesionalidad del periodismo tenga únicamente que ver con los condicionamientos políticos. Puede ser que arrastremos eso desde hace muchos años, que mucha gente esté condicionada de que la vayan a indicar. Y yo como periodista obvio el instinto natural de caerle atrás a la noticia. Es como un comportamiento incorporado, una autocensura aprendida que sí tiene sus puntos de contacto con los condicionamientos políticos, pero eso no es todo. No concibo, por ejemplo, a un estudiante que se acaba de graduar, que además estudió la carrera por vocación, y que esté frente a una cuestión que es noticia y que no llegue a la redacción y le diga a su editor: “Me llegó este rumor y voy detrás de eso”. Porque ahí no hay nada, no hay ningún condicionamiento político que te diga nada de eso, porque incluso si estás delante de un asunto que pudiera tener implicaciones políticas, lo mejor que haces es llegar al fondo del asunto, averiguar la verdad de ese asunto. Y no es ya un compromiso como periodismo, sino también con lo otro [¿con la Revolución?].

Te decía que hay limitaciones profesionales que no sólo tienen que ver con eso. Tienen que ver con la manera en la que logras sortear obstáculos básicos de la profesión, no sólo en Cuba, sino en cualquier parte del mundo. Porque muchas veces le digo a mis jóvenes periodistas de la redacción: las fuentes que se cierran no son únicamente en nuestro país, a nadie le gusta que le saquen los trapitos sucios al sol, en todas partes del mundo cierran las puertas. Si no, ¿por qué hay tantos

periodistas en el mundo que mueren en el cumplimiento de su deber? Estamos hablando de que no se sientan que por estar en Cuba están más limitados.

Hay muchas cosas en Cuba que funcionan diferente al resto del mundo, pero en todos los lugares las fuentes se cierran cuando la información es sensible, es delicada. Y tú, como periodista, tienes que buscar la forma de sortear esos obstáculos, de llegar a otras vías, que para otros, por los mecanismos establecidos, puede ser más fácil o tiene otras vías. Pero pasan por la profesionalidad, y no tienen que ver con el condicionamiento político. El debate existe y es muy fuerte.

Creo que el condicionamiento político está, pero también está la desprofesionalización. Ese instinto periodístico se ha ido perdiendo también por las limitaciones propias del 'Período Especial'. O sea, *Granma* hoy es diario, igual que *Juventud Rebelde*, pero la mayoría de los periódicos del país dejaron de ser diarios. *Trabajadores* ya no lo es, es un semanario. Las limitaciones tecnológicas con las que se trabaja en la radio y en la televisión son muy fuertes. Entonces, cuando dispones de una sola cámara en un telecentro, tienes que decidir qué es más importante. Y ahí entonces entran los condicionamientos políticos, porque tienes cinco acontecimientos. Pero hay uno que, desde el punto de vista político, te dijeron que tienes que trabajar. Tú dices, -Bueno. Y se resiente desde el punto de vista informativo la prensa. Pero no todo funciona de esa manera.

Sara: En las tesis de licenciatura leí que, al principio, cuando se comenzaron a cubrir los lineamientos, había una comisión que revisaba los trabajos periodísticos y que después desapareció.

RB25: No puedo decirte de eso porque no lo viví aquí en *Granma*. Yo trabajaba en un medio provincial, y no funcionaba de esa manera. No sé cómo pasó eso en los inicios de *Granma*. Nosotros hoy los trabajos que están relacionados con esos temas, a no ser los que tengan que ver con la aplicación de nuevas políticas... *Granma* es el lugar donde primero se publican las nuevas medidas que se van a aplicar. Incluso, ese mismo día en que sale la Gaceta sale la nota en *Granma* de cuál es la nueva medida que se publica en gaceta. Con excepción de esas cosas que revisa la Comisión, porque hablan de políticas que no han sido fijadas ni establecidas... Excepto eso, que se trata de algo que no ha sido publicado y de hecho ni siquiera lo hacemos nosotros, el equipo de *Granma* (lo hace el equipo oficial de prensa del Consejo de Estado). Eso sí lo revisan ellos. Otro tipo de materiales relacionados con la implementación de los lineamientos ellos no los revisan. Si ocurrió así en un inicio, no estaba en *Granma*.

Sara: ¿Hasta qué punto se ha sentido la mentalidad de plaza sitiada en la regulación y en el trabajo de los medios?

RB25: Esa es una cuestión que influye desde hace muchos años. Fidel incluso hace algunos años le llamó 'el síndrome del misterio', y eso golpea tanto a las fuentes como a los propios periodistas. Muchas fuentes te dicen que no te pueden dar la información porque es sensible, y estamos hablando de cuántas toneladas de azúcar se produjeron. Y tú te preguntas, ¿por qué puede ser sensible la cantidad de toneladas de azúcar? Realmente, el país ha vivido en muchos momentos diferentes estrategias y cosas que, lamentablemente, han creado esos comportamientos. No vienen de la nada, lo que pasa es que se han creado reacciones en mucha gente que cree que cualquier cosa es secreto de estado. Y también, muchos periodistas que se autocensuran, no estamos hablando solamente de una censura exterior. Por ejemplo, hoy la educación en Cuba tiene muchos problemas como los puede tener la educación en cualquier parte del mundo. Pero para nosotros son más sensibles, porque es uno de los grandes logros de la Revolución. Pero bueno, ¿hasta qué punto reflejar los problemas que tiene la educación puede ser empleada para desacreditar a la Revolución ante el mundo, cuando se sabe que hay muchas campañas internacionales contra la Revolución?

Desde ese punto de vista, sí condiciona el trabajo que hacemos porque nos hace repensar muchas veces el enfoque desde el que vamos a abordar los temas. La salud pública hoy tiene problemas de

infraestructura, de un grupo de cosas, de cómo funcionan los mecanismos, y pasa por lo mismo, por cómo abordamos los problemas que tiene la salud pública. Porque hay que decir que tiene problemas pero, ¿cómo los abordamos sin que eso sea usado en nuestra contra? Nosotros hemos visto muchos de estos trabajos que publicamos en *Granma*, interesantísimos además, cómo se titulan en la prensa extranjera, en los cables, donde dicen que *Granma* se atreve a criticar tal cosa, porque *Granma* es la opinión oficial, y eso pesa en el caso de *Granma*. Pesa esa mentalidad de plaza sitiada, y pesa la responsabilidad de ser el órgano oficial.

Sara: ¿Se considera la prensa extranjera como un enemigo?

RB25: No como un enemigo, pero sí es algo de lo que uno está pendiente, sobre cuál será la reacción. Nosotros hemos ido abandonando un poco esa sensación de que todo lo que vamos a poner se va a tergiversar, y de que todo lo que vamos a poner va a ser usado en nuestra contra. Porque, además, hemos llegado a la conclusión de que lo que no digamos nosotros, otro va a venir y lo va a decir. Lo que no esclarezca la prensa nuestra, de todos modos eso puede crear tergiversaciones en el pueblo y lo puede aprovechar otro. Eso se ha ido abandonando un poco, pero no del todo. Y nosotros a la prensa extranjera no la vemos nunca como un aliado, pero tampoco es un enemigo. Es algo que está ahí, vemos cómo van a reflejar las cosas. Monitoreamos un poco cuál va a ser la reacción ante lo que publicamos. Pero lo que tratamos es de evitar que eso condicione lo que nosotros publiquemos. No vamos a poner esto porque la prensa extranjera lo va a poner de esta manera.

Aquí en Cuba hay un cuento muy popular, que era un hombre que se hacía mala sangre por si se le rompía el carro a media noche y necesitaba un gato hidráulico. Se pone y se construye una situación negativa de entrada, cuando debería ver lo que pudiera pasar. Nosotros estábamos como el hombre del gato, y eso es un poco de condicionamiento. Pero sí seguimos de cerca lo que dicen de Cuba, lo que dicen de nosotros como medio, como periodistas, porque para nosotros es importante. Tenemos una misión hacia el exterior porque la imagen de Cuba ha sido muy tratada y maltratada, y el alcance de nuestros medios no es mucho comparado con el alcance que tienen los grandes conglomerados. El alcance que tienen nuestros medios tenemos que tratar de aprovecharlo bien.

Sara: Cuando Fidel escribe sus reflexiones siempre pide que no se publiquen en la portada de *Granma*, pero normalmente sí que salen en primera página. ¿Por qué el periódico toma esa decisión?

RB25: Lo que sucede es que Fidel para nosotros es muy especial. Fidel, como dijo Raúl cuando asumió la responsabilidad, Fidel es Fidel. Va a ser siempre el comandante en Jefe porque se lo ganó por mérito propio, porque fue el conductor de la Revolución. Entonces, lo que diga Fidel, aunque él diga que no lo pongamos en portada, siempre lo ponemos en portada porque es lógico, porque es de lo más importante que va a salir. A nosotros nos pasó algo curioso esta semana. Fidel pidió que la reflexión saliera en páginas interiores, pero eso entró tan tarde al periódico que ya habíamos publicado una primera edición, que fue la que se publicó en la mayor parte del país. Al otro, día cuando la gente revisó los otros medios y vio que la reflexión de Fidel no estaba en el *Granma*, eso motivó una cantidad de llamadas a este periódico increíble, porque la gente decía que lo había oído, pero de pasada, que quería estudiarla, leerla con calma. Y entonces la publicamos de nuevo para el resto del país y para la capital. Al final no salió, se quedó publicado sólo para la capital del país, Matanzas, Artemisa y Pinar del Río, que fueron los únicos que la vieron. Lo que pasa es eso, que Fidel para nosotros es noticia porque no está en los medios constantemente como estaba antes, y cualquier cosa que haga es un acontecimiento de primera plana. Lo que no siempre puede salir en portada por la extensión, pero de todos modos él lo pide muchas veces expresamente porque él siente que a estas alturas él no es una figura como para estar en portada. Pero sí lo va a ser porque, además, el pueblo lo pide. Cualquier cosa que tiene que ver con él, la gente lo pide.

Sara: Los cambios en *Granma* se enmarcan en un debate más general. Hay un sentimiento de que por fin se está debatiendo el papel del periodismo, incluso la creación de un marco legal. ¿Ese debate se queda sólo en el debate teórico, o se ve reflejado también en la forma en que trabajan los periodistas?

RB25: No es un debate solamente teórico, sino que es un debate que hoy puja mucho en las redacciones por convertirse en acciones concretas. Lo que pasa es que, como te decía, no va a ser una cosa de un día para otro. Estamos hablando de transformar una práctica periodística que se ha sembrado en los periodistas, en los directivos en los medios de prensa, en los funcionarios, en las fuentes...Y eso no se derrumba de un día para otro. Creo que no solamente es un debate teórico, que son acciones concretas que se están desarrollando y que poco a poco van a ir transformando ese panorama. No creo que vayamos a ver a la vuelta del año próximo un periodismo completamente diferente en Cuba, no va a ser de esa manera. A eso le puede imprimir mayor dinamismo el que finalmente se aprueben esos marcos legales, esas regulaciones. Eso les pondrá mucho dinamismo a esas transformaciones. Pero, sobre todo, tiene que ver con las transformaciones en la mentalidad de la gente.

Annex VIII: Newspaper Articles in Chronological Order

Period A: March 1990 – November 1991

Granma. (1990) 'Darán a Conocer Mañana en el Cuartel Moncada, Llamamiento al IV Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba', *Granma*, Wednesday March 14 1990, p. 1.

Granma. (1990) 'Habla Hoy Raúl en el Aniversario 112 de la Protesta de Baraguá', *Granma*, Thursday March 15 1990, p. 1.

Álvarez Estevez, R. (1990) 'La Intransigencia Revolucionaria Frente a la Claudicación', *Granma*, Thursday March 15 1990, pp. 1,4.

Peláez, O. (1990) 'Seguidores de Baraguá', *Granma*, Thursday March 15 1990, p. 2.

Rodríguez, R. (1990) 'Protesta de Baraguá: Antecedentes y Trascendencia', *Granma*, Thursday March 15 1990, p. 4.

Granma. (1990) 'El Futuro de nuestra Patria Será un Eterno Baraguá', *Granma*, Friday March 16 1990, pp. 1,4,5.

Ricardo Luis, R. (1990) 'Convocado el IV Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba', *Granma*, Friday March 16 1990, pp. 1,2.

Camacho Albert, R. (1990) 'Socialismo en el Corazón del Pueblo', *Granma*, Friday March 16 1990, p. 2.

Camacho Albert, R. (1990) 'Convocado el IV ...', *Granma*, Friday March 16 1990, p. 2.

Torres, H. (1990) 'Apoyo Juvenil y Popular a IV Llamamiento del Partido Comunista de Cuba', *Granma*, Friday March 16 1990, p. 2.

Granma. (1990) 'Masivo Apoyo al Llamamiento al IV Congreso del Partido', *Granma*, Saturday March 17 1990, pp. 1,2.

Shelton, A. (1990) 'La Zafra Azucarera y el Programa Alimentario Centro de los Debates', *Granma*, Monday March 19 1990, pp. 1,2.

Camacho Albert, R., Rojas Aguilera, A. and Pérez Hechevarría, A. (1990) 'Continúa Apoyo del Pueblo al Llamamiento al IV Congreso', *Granma*, Monday March 19 1990, p. 2.

Piñera, T. (1990) 'Eco Revolucionario, Internacionalista', *Granma*, Monday March 19 1990, p. 2.

Granma. (1990) 'Apoyan Internacionalistas Cubanos en Argelia Convocatoria al IV Congreso', *Granma*, Monday March 19 1990, p. 6.

Rassí, R. (1990) 'El Pueblo al Debate de los Temas del Llamamiento', *Granma*, Thursday March 22 1990, pp. 1,2.

Granma. (1990) 'Preparémosnos para Participar Consciente y Responsablemente', *Granma*, Saturday March 31 1990, p. 1.

Riera, R. M. (1990) 'Inician Textileros Análisis del Llamamiento al IV Congreso del Partido', *Granma*, Monday April 2 1990, p. 1.

Oramas, J. (1990) 'Con Voluntad de Profundizar en nuestro Socialismo', *Granma*, Thursday April 5 1990, p. 1.

Granma. (1990) 'Propuestas de Ferroviarios Guantanameros para una Mayor Eficiencia Económica', *Granma*, Saturday April 7 1990, p. 1.

Granma. (1990) 'El Llamamiento Es una Convocatoria a Pensar, a Razonar, a Reflexionar', *Granma*, Monday April 9 1990, pp. 1,2.

Granma. (1990) 'Sólo lo que el Pueblo Hace suyo se Logra y Perdura', *Granma*, Monday April 9 1990, p. 2.

Moisés, J. (1990) 'Inician Espirituanos Análisis del Llamamiento al IV del Partido', *Granma*, Wednesday April 11 1990, pp. 1,2.

Granma. (1990) 'Se Requiere una Participación Consciente y Activa', *Granma*, Friday, April 13 1990, p. 1.

Lee, S. (1990) 'Lo Importante Es la Calidad del Proceso de Discusión del Llamamiento, y en eso Estamos Empeñados', *Granma*, Saturday April 14 1990, pp. 1,2.

Machado Rodríguez, D. L. (1990) 'Las Ciencias Sociales Antes del Llamamiento al IV Congreso del Partido', *Granma*, Thursday April 26 1990, p. 3.

Jiménez, G. (1990) 'Debate y Cambios Educativos', *Granma*, Thursday May 3 1990, p. 4.

Varela Pérez, J. (1990) 'Análisis y Discusión de Junio a Septiembre', *Granma*, Monday May 21 1990, pp. 1,2.

Granma. (1990) 'Un Espacio que No Debe Quedar Vacío', *Granma*, Thursday May 24 1990, p3

Granma. (1990) 'Constituida la Comisión Organizadora del IV Congreso del Partido', *Granma*, Monday May 28 1990, p. 1.

Granma. (1990) 'Efectuado Pleno del Comité Nacional de la UPEC', *Granma*, Monday May 28 1990, p. 2.

Rubio, V. (1990) '¿Tiene que Haber Siempre Unanimidad?', *Granma*, Tuesday May 29 1990, p. 2.

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